The FRONTIERS OF THE HEART

Victor Margueritte



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BY

VICTOR MARGUERITTE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
FREDERIC LEES



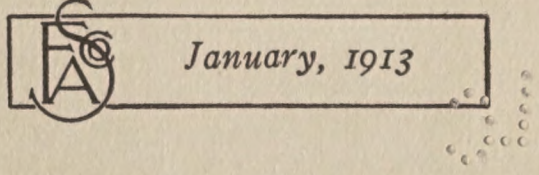
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202

PREFACE

By means of two great collective bodies, the Army and the Town of Metz, *Le Désastre* endeavoured to revive an epoch. The following picture, painted with the same colours, is confined to the presentation of a household tragedy. In the case of this Frenchwoman and this German, in the case of these races which confront each other, the fatherland rises above the family,— love is killed by war.

The heart also possesses frontiers,— unsuspected walls hidden by peace and happiness, and which, on the bloody day, rise up abruptly. Such would be the import of these pages, which do but execrate that abominable scourge, war, and express the desire that, on each side of the frontier, family and fatherland be held in honour.

Without wasting time over a tedious bibliography, I am desirous, with respect to the historical portion of this novel, of thanking M. Henri Michel, the curator of the Amiens Library, who kindly brought to my notice the very interesting unpublished memoirs of Ambroise Janvier, and M. Niquet, the archivist who communicated to me the deliberations of the Municipal Council of those days, as well as the

rare *Mémorial d'Amiens.* I have also consulted, with great benefit, M. Gabriel Monod's *Français et Allemands,* and M. de Calonne's *Histoire d'Amiens.*

V. M.

PART I

I

"SLOWLY, slowly, little one!"

Marthe Ellangé raised her beautiful brown eyes towards the aged face of the murmurer and smiled.

"I beg your pardon, grandfather. I wasn't thinking . . ."

"Of my seventy-eight years, eh?"

"Oh! but you don't look them!"

The Major straightened his stooping figure, squaring his broad shoulders in his dark green frock coat, which was drawn in at the waist like a military tunic. The large red rosette of the Legion of Honour decorated his buttonhole. A roguish look gleamed beneath his heavy eyelids.

"Come now! That's all very well!"

The girl blushed.

"We are late, too," she said. "He must have been there a quarter of an hour already."

"Ah! love's fair dream! But must I tell you what I think? Don't hurry too much. There is good in waiting; it excites desire."

"Yes, grandfather, but Otto and I have been waiting a whole year."

"You will love each other all the better for that. Listen, little one, the poets are sometimes right:

> L'absence est à l'amour comme est au feu le vent
> Qui éteint le petit et avive le grand!

But where the deuce have the others gone to?"

"Lost,—lost once more. I'm sure they do it on purpose."

The Major shrugged his shoulders in indication of the human river which was carrying them along, the incessant eddy of the crowd, passing backwards and forwards. All nations mingled their characters, dress and speech in that place. There was a roar as of the ocean and the tide under the huge glazed arch of the central alley, which, on that June day, had become stiflingly hot. A cloud of fine dust, like a golden veil, floated in the depths of the galleries, whose circular spaces, filled with marvels, stretched on every side. Innumerable heads moved up and down in the distance. An acrid and powerful odour entered the throat and dulled the senses: the emanation from that gigantic furnace into which one hundred thousand beings were packed. On that Sunday the 1867 Exhibition was in full swing.

An exclamation of relief passed the girl's lips.

They had just issued from the Rue de Belgique

and entered the Avenue d'Europe, leaving behind them the deadened roar of the huge glass-roofed palace, which, with its annulated domes, might have been compared to an immense oval sea-shell, lying flat on the ground, and whose mighty, confused murmur — a murmur as of the sea — gradually diminished. The splendour of the declining day enveloped them. How pleasant was the freshness of the expanses of verdure, with their light-coloured buildings scattered here and there! The Major shaded his reddened eyes with his hand, and turned his shaking head from side to side. His large white moustache bristled on his rough skin, which resembled an ancient stone eaten away by lichens. Scorched by the sun of many lands and shrivelled up by age, this old soldier of Napoleon, this Brazilian colonist, this old independent gentleman of Amiens was now but a ruin. Nevertheless, with his tall, corpulent stature, his scarred cheek, and his rough good-natured air, he still presented a fine figure.

"Positively, I've lost sight of them altogether."

Marthe pouted. Tall and slender, with a well-developed figure and round hips, she formed, on the old man's arm, an astonishing contrast. A large *paille d'Italie* hat, the black velvet ribbons of which fell on to her low chignon, framed her pure face and auburn hair. Her twenty-three years, which still retained the grace of a young girl and already

indicated the maturity of a woman, exhaled health, distinction, strength. She had a peach-like complexion and snow-white teeth, the brilliancy and softness of a beautiful golden fruit. A strong yet sweet look — her whole soul — shone in her admirable chestnut-coloured eyes. A shade of hardness appeared in them now.

"Father doesn't like Otto and mother fears a marriage which would take me far from her . . . If they had *their* way we should not meet M. Rudheimer to-day."

The Major struck the ground with his gold-headed stick.

"But haven't I told you that you shall marry him?"

"Yes, I know that quite well. Consequently, it is not a fear of the future which troubles me. I am certain that I shall be very happy with Otto. Hesse is not far from either Paris or Amiens. And Marburg is a charming town. You know it, since you were in garrison there."

"An owl's nest. Everything three centuries old. But it has changed, perhaps, since . . ."

"No, everything is in its place and still older. Ah! how I adore Marburg. I can see myself there already, in my little house in the Burgerstrasse."

She sighed.

"No, what grieves me is that my *fiancé* . . ."

"Your *fiancé*, your *fiancé!*"

"But, grandfather, it is not only the announce-

ment of the marriage which binds, nor the ring. Our feeling is such that it is in no way increased by these official consecrations. I have his word and he has mine; — that is enough. Well, now, what wounds and irritates me is the fact that for the past year they have taken no account of my wish, and continue to regard Otto as a stranger and our promise as null. You are the only one who understands me,— you and Frida. As to my brother . . ."

Louis, the barrister, and the elder brother Jacques, the lieutenant, looked with no kindly eye on a sister who dreamed of a marriage which would exile her.

She tenderly pressed the arm upon which she appeared to be leaning but which, filially, she was supporting.

"They discuss and quibble as though my mind were not made up. Otto has been here a fortnight and yet not a day has passed without papa making him feel that he is not yet one of the family and never will be except against his will. Jacques and Louis have not even taken the trouble to come to Paris to meet him, and mamma knits her brows as soon as she sees him. Poor mamma! It is sad to think that, in order to conquer one's happiness, one must torture those one loves!"

The old soldier uttered a sudden exclamation and whirled his heavy stick round in his knotty hand,— a flourish which caused two English ladies to step aside and regard him with an air of reproof. A

group of Indians passed. Grave under their turbans and white garments, their features were so clear cut that they appeared to be in bronze. There was a dormant fire in their black eyes. The fustanella of a Greek fell in ample folds over his red gaiters. Some placid Dutchmen elbowed a bevy of beautiful Scandinavians, long in their lines and loud in their speech. Golden hair fell in curls on their swan-like necks.

"Little one," said the Major, "the essential thing is to conquer your happiness. Let each individual follow his conscience and each generation its ideas. Do you think that, when, at the age of seventeen and in the year of Jena, I left Amiens for the war, and when, after Waterloo, I sailed for Brazil, my parents did not weep? The Ellangés had been doctors from father to son. But I parted from the syringe and the bistoury. And the best hours of my life were those which I spent as a boy rushing over Europe behind the Tondu [1] and those, when a man, which I employed in planting and harvesting coffee at Sao Paulo. Not to mention the fact that over there I also made a fortune, which enabled me, when I returned with Pépita, to sweeten the declining days of the old folks."

He contemplated the dreamy Marthe stealthily. She had the very look of her grandmother.

"Your eyes are the same as hers. Ah! if you had only known her."

[1] The little corporal,— Napoleon I.— Translator.

Moved, he called to memory their long life together,— a cloudless life, in spite of the difference in their ages and nationality. He could hear her singing voice and its guttural languor. Since he had been happy with a woman of Portuguese blood, why should not Marthe, in her turn, find happiness with a German?

The girl evoked the pastel which decorated her bedroom, above the chest of drawers. Within a faded gold frame, a dark face with thick wavy hair was smiling like an ardent-souled madonna. Marthe thought of the obscure bonds of heredity, the source of beings, a bottomless abyss. Thus the light which shone in the grandmother's tender look, and the extinguished flame of which she had so many times scrutinised, was living within her, kindled anew. And the look with which she herself boldly faced the future,— that look in which her soul, her own soul, blazed,— that look which for the first time seemed to her to fix, to possess the present was but a reflection, the mysterious legacy of the past!

She laughed.

"Very well, grandfather, I will do as you did. I will conquer my happiness."

"How so?"

"You'll see . . . Six o'clock already! let us hurry."

"Six o'clock? Where do you see that?"

She pointed to the distant clock of the École

Militaire, situated on the axis of the building, at the end of the palisaded Champ-de-Mars.

"Ah! good."

They passed in front of the statue of Leopold I and the annex of the Beaux-Arts. In her eagerness to have a definite explanation, she hurried the old man along. She felt sure that her father and mother, with Frida Lehmann, must already be at the meeting-place,— La Grande Serre, in the Jardin Réservé. If only Otto had not yet arrived and she could extort a consent to the marriage from her parents! Dragging himself along, the Major followed her. He was more active in the old days — fifty-two years ago! — when he strode over that same ground at the head of his company, the Vélites of the Young Guard. How many times he had raised his eyes toward that clock whose indefatigable hands ever continued to turn! Since the time of Louis XVI they had witnessed on the grassy plain the great fêtes of the Revolution and the Empire. They had measured time at the reviews of the Restoration and the July Monarchy. They still recorded it at the displays of Napoleon III, at this World's Fair, where, with so much pomp and profusion, the glory and the wealth of France was spread out.

With a feeling of pride, the Major took in at a glance the foreign section which stretched on his right. Surmounted by multicoloured flags, the pavilions of Prussia and the small German States,

of Spain, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland raised, amidst clumps of flowers and trees, their picturesque architecture. Further off, around the Palais Central,— a prodigious accumulation of all the industries and arts of the country, and symbolical of the feverish heart of Paris, the capital of the world,— were the buildings of Sweden, Austria, Italy and Russia. Still further away, like a cincture of suburbs, stood those of the Pontifical States, Turkey, Persia, the American Republic and China. Jean Pierre Ellangé thought that he was once more living in heroic times. An audience of kings sat at the Opera; they did homage at the Tuileries. To-day it was the Czar and the King of Prussia; to-morrow it would be the Emperor of Austria and the Sultan. The impassive-faced Emperor, with the Grand Cordon across his breast, filed past in his eagle emblazoned victoria amidst a retinue of sovereigns. The beauty of the Empress shed additional glory on the brilliant splendour of the court balls. The laurels of Sebastopol and Magenta, hardly yet dried by the sun of Mexico, made the reign a triumphal victory. The dark days of the Invasion, the nightmare of Cossack boots and Prussian heels were forgotten. Had he, Jean Pierre, really lived through that? No, victories grouped themselves, faithful still, at the foot of the throne. The crowned N shone as in former days on the purple velvet, rustling with bees.

A sound of trumpets, sharp and distinct, came

through the sonorous air from beyond the barracks. A vision of the army appeared before the Major's eyes. France was again at the height of her power. Enthusiasm followed by a sudden feeling of melancholy, filled his heart. He felt so very tired, so near his end! He had traversed so many countries and periods! Soon his eyes would close. Oh! that they might do so whilst this magnificence lasted!

"I say, but you've made me warm!" exclaimed the old man.

They had arrived, on skirting the fresh-water Aquarium, at the approaches to the Grande Serre, whose trellis-work portico and curved roofs stood on a calcareous foundation, surrounded by gushing streams, in the middle of the Jardin Réservé. The oriflammes, hanging motionless at the top of the flag-staffs, suddenly began to wave in the air. A breeze had sprung up, caressing the grey, heat-ladened atmosphere. The setting sun covered the glass, which had the aspect of metal in fusion, with large golden scales.

"There they are," murmured Marthe.

She had caught sight of them in the central alley of the building, opposite a clump of tropical plants, — an enormous dark bouquet of cacti, euphorbias, palms, bananas, latanias, aloes and lianes which formed a complicated and inextricable mass of branches and prickly, hairy leaves. M. and Mme. Ellangé, with a discontented air, stood there on the watch. Near them, comfortably seated in the hol-

low of a wicker-work bench, good Frida Lehmann was dozing.

Marthe advanced quickly towards her mother, who also made a few steps to meet them, whilst M. Ellangé, in order to show his detachment, sat down near the governess, thus exaggerating his ordinary gravity.

"Otto has not yet arrived," declared Mme. Ellangé in a reproachful tone. "It is inconceivable. I think that when people make an appointment . . ."

"So much the better, *petite mère!*"

She did not waste time in making excuses for him, but went straight to the point. The minutes were precious.

"It is just as well that he is late. For it gives me time to speak to you and father."

Mme. Ellangé sounded her, put out of countenance. This counter-attack left her defenceless. An excellent woman, whose weakness was boundless in the case of those she loved, she submitted, in this matter, to the habitual authority of her husband. At forty-five years of age, with her grey fillets and small, plump, spruce face, she had the ingenuous air of a little girl. In her flax-blue eyes was to be read absolute goodness, and in her entire person — discreet and steeped in devotion — an astonishing absence of will-power. She had two masters, whom she unreservedly venerated: her husband and God. Two passions governed her: her home, which she carefully kept in hand, and her daughter,

who, on reaching adolescence, had escaped from her. She had had no more influence over her than upon her sons, Jacques and Louis, devil-may-care youths who, whilst yet boys, exercised a man-like tyranny.

"But—"

With a look she appealed to the Major, but immediately beat a retreat on hearing him say:

"Marthe is quite right. The matter must be ended."

"You must say that to Lucien," she sighed.

M. Ellangé, on seeing his daughter walk towards him with a firm footstep, faced her. A tall, thin man with a bony face, almost white whiskers, yellow complexion and clear look, he rose, and with a dignity befitting an Imperial Procurator. M. Ellangé, whose frigidity dissimulated a rare judicial knowledge and a cultured mind, seemed the very incarnation of the magistrature, ever ready to present a claim. He possessed more heart than he showed on the surface, a very keen taste for literature,— especially Latin literature, and a deep knowledge of politics and history.

"Well, where's the *fiancé,* Mademoiselle?"

He added between his teeth:

"If only he could never come!"

"Oh! Father," protested Marthe, "that is too bad!"

"Mein gott!"

"Lucien!"

"Leave me, my good wife," ordered M. Ellangé.

"And as to you, Fräulein, I will do without your advice."

Mme. Ellangé, overwhelmed, dropped into a seat by the side of Frida Lehmann. With her hands clasped over her knees, the latter regarded with disquietude the combat between her pupil, almost her daughter (for had she not formed her, morally and spiritually?) and the hardy antagonist she knew the magistrate to be. Father and daughter faced each other, with compressed lips and stiffened chins. With a confident look, Marthe enjoined her governess to keep silent; Frida could be of no assistance to her at such a moment.

M. Ellangé was that day taking his revenge on the influence which had been exercised for so many years. If Marthe had turned aside from their ideas, if she had also taken, in a particularly striking manner, the German impress,— that amalgam of romantic sensibility, practical common sense and steadiness of mind, it was "Mademoiselle" Lehmann's doing. Beware of attaching yourself to people! Ah! he had been well inspired on the day when, on the lookout for a governess for his daughter and touched by the misfortunes of Frida, a penniless orphan, he had brought her from Hesse on the recommendation of Father Rudheimer. What need had he to write to that stupid pastor, a former acquaintance at the École de Droit? And what an idea, too, that of teaching Marthe German! They saw now what that had led to. The deuce

take their systems and all the philosophers beyond the Rhine,— philosophic systems under whose fascination he had come like other people but which with all the reveries of their poets, he now cursed. The deuce take Kant and Goethe, Hegel, Klopstock and Heine. And the deuce take Frida Lehmann. In turn he cast a severe look at the governess' good, freckled face, her tow-like hair and corpulent body, the result of gluttony and lack of physical exercise. Frida had a beautiful soul within a heavy envelope.

"Father," said Marthe resolutely, "we have evaded this matter enough. Otto is leaving for Germany at the end of the week. His patients require attention. On leaving us yesterday he was no further advanced than on the very first day. This situation cannot last any longer. We have loved each other since . . ."

"Your visit to Marburg! I know."

Ah! that three months' holiday, four years ago! Entrusted to the care of Frida, who had not seen Hesse again since her arrival at Amiens, Marthe had fallen in love with Otto. What an error he had committed in arranging that sojourn, during which, under the pretext that she was perfecting herself in the study of the language, she had familiarised herself with Marburg society and had noticed the doctor. And what weakness he had shown in consenting to her return there in the following summer! . . . But how was he to know what was going to happen? . . . He detested Marthe's feel-

ing, which had been sown and had grown to maturity without his knowledge . . . Her dissimulation and then, after the confession, her obstinacy drove him out of his wits.

Very calmly, she continued:

"We have loved each other for four years. And we told each other so a year ago. It was then that I opened my heart to you."

"Somewhat late in the day."

"On the very day on which I began to read my heart. Did I know until then? It was Otto's confession which revealed me to myself. Well, you asked me then to reflect and have patience. I have done so, during twelve months . . . It has been a long trial! We have now seen each other again, and our love is stronger — if that is possible — than ever. During the past fortnight mamma and you have been able to form an opinion of the character and value of M. Rudheimer . . . His father is but waiting for the announcement that you are agreeable, to make his demand. What do you decide?"

M. Ellangé assumed a joking attitude.

"The deuce! you need a reply immediately?"

She spoke out plainly:

"Immediately!"

"Well, well! . . ."

He made a sudden gesture.

Seeing the game compromised by her vivacity, she adopted a tenderer tone:

"What, little father? Do you reproach Otto with anything?"

"Oh! no, I've nothing to say against him. He is a loyal and honest fellow. I believe that he has as generous a heart and as quick an intellect as it is possible for a German to have. He is fond of work and his profession, which is a fine one. He is a true man of science."

"There now, you see his good qualities quite well!"

"But, my poor child, love is not the only thing. There is marriage. Have you considered what your life would be over there, far from your native country and your parents, without friends and isolated in an unbreathable air,— an existence during which everything would clash with your tastes and habits? . . . Think of yourself, you, so French, in spite of the culture which you owe to Mlle. Lehmann —(the name stuck in his throat)— you, a Catholic, in that Lutheran hole Marburg, where every one, from the Aulic Councillor to the youngest red-capped student, would look upon you as an infidel,— where the old women would point you out with their fingers!"

"But you know how liberal Otto is. Those are subjects upon which we never enter. I am sure he will respect my religious scruples, as I respect his. And as to the others — the world . . ."

She swept them aside with a gesture.

"You will have your work cut out. The in-

dividual cannot escape from the society which surrounds and has formed him. Little by little it will deform you. If you marry this man you are lost to us."

"Never, father; since I shall always love you just as much as ever. Yes; to leave home is a sad law. But it is written: 'Thou shalt leave thy father and thy mother.' Have not the birds to fly from the nest? Some day or other I shall have to leave home and found a family of my own."

"Evidently. But Otto is not the only one who loves you. I know an honest fellow . . ."

"It is useless saying more, father. You mean Lieutenant Charbalyé? He is your fancy and Jacques' too. But I tell you I don't love him. You would not, surely, condemn me to a marriage in which affection was not shared?"

"You would not have flown so far away from home."

"There are no frontiers in the case of either affection or memory."

"Oh! yes, there are. You will be lost to us and to your native country."

She collected her thoughts, and then said, religiously:

"My native land! But I shall take it with me, make it known and loved. And thus I shall serve it better than by living peaceably in a house in Amiens."

"You will serve it better by becoming a Prus-

sian? And what about your sons? — your sons who will be born foreigners, subservient to the laws of Berlin,— your sons who will one day, perhaps, bear arms against everything which you love — and abandon so cheerfully!"

"My sons,— no, no!"

"Heedless girl! To-day hides to-morrow from you. Behind Hegel there is Moltke. But look and reflect. It is not a Hessian you would marry but a Prussian, for, since the Treaty of Prague, Electoral Hesse no longer exists. Prussia extends as far as the Maine. And do you know what Prussia, for the past sixty years, has desired and patiently, tenaciously prepared for? The revenge for Jena. *Hodie mihi, cras tibi!* Violence engenders violence. To them we are the hereditary enemy,— the *Erbfeind,* as you say. Certainly Otto does not hate us; on the contrary. The Rudheimers have always loved France, and they deserve praise for so doing. For France has not always loved Marburg. Ask your grandfather about that and 1807. He was there."

He addressed his concluding words to the Major who, out of discretion, had withdrawn and, concluding that the discussion was nearing its end, was now returning, after having walked round the greenhouse alongside the basins. These encircled the central clump, the miniature virgin forest, and formed a brilliant girdle. All the flowers of June — red, pink, yellow, blue and white — ornamented

the borders there, in tufts, rows and mosaics, and scented the air. Mme. Ellangé and Frida, hypnotised, still sat listening on their bench.

"As to that," confessed the Major, "we deteriorated the bastions and casemates a little. By heavens! What an explosion! Fine fortifications, *ma foi!* Swept clean away! There were fragments of the walls in all the gardens of the neighbourhood. Huge blocks, blown up as though they were fleas. Those devils, you see, had driven us out of the castle, so the Tondu retaliated by demolishing every fortress on Hessian territory."

"Under these conditions, Marthe," continued M. Ellangé, "you will understand what Hesse, now that it has become Prussia, feels. Rancour added to hatred. For Prussia hates us. I can read hatred in the courteous good-nature of its king, a guest effaced, notwithstanding Sadowa, by the Imperial Majesties. I can read it in the smile of that big white cuirassier with a face like a bulldog ready to bite. William and Bismarck envy and detest us. Did you see their exhibition? Full of cannon, and what cannon too! All sizes and calibres. The Krupp arsenal. As much as to say: 'Beware! Whose turn is it now?' Victory has given them confidence in their strength. Appetite has come with their teeth. You allow your dream to blind your eyes. Look at the horizon! Yes, open a map of Europe, *sapristi!* The progress they have made is startling. The Germanic Confederation is

buried. Germany is no longer at Vienna but at Berlin. Holstein, Sleswig, Hanover, Electoral Hesse, the Duchy of Nassau and Frankfort are henceforth Prussian, and Prussia is at the head of the Confederation of the North. The Southern States are uncertain and distracted by dissensions. You tell me that I paint too black a picture? No, no, my child. War is inevitable. Whether it will come to-morrow or in twenty years, I know not. But one day it will come! And on that day . . ."

"I don't want to think of it. It is impossible."

"History has its laws and events take their course. Nothing can stop them. Prussia is growing. Let any one who stands in her way look out! After Denmark, after Austria, it will be France's turn."

"Let them come," chuckled the Major.

The Imperial Procurator took up his historical theme again.

"Oh! my mind is easy as regards that! People think twice before they measure themselves with a Napoleon. But anyway, whatever Marthe may say, it is possible. And it is my duty to make her see all the consequences of such an act. I no longer appeal to her heart but to her patriotism and reason."

The grandfather pointed out to the father his daughter's wrinkled brow, her sad but obstinate eyes.

"Then the case is heard," he said. "You can conclude."

"It is true?" cried M. Ellangé, sorrowfully. "Your mother and I have loved you and brought you up only to lose you? No, that shall not be. We will not let you bring about your own unhappiness."

"My happiness, Father! The happiness of my life. I love Otto with all my soul. He returns my love. It is that which gives me the strength to struggle against you, however painful that may be. Why should I sacrifice a certainty of obtaining joy through fear of sorrows which perhaps will never come? A Frenchwoman I am,—a Frenchwoman in heart I shall remain. And your daughter ever,—your grateful daughter."

"Wait a while. It is an act of madness."

"Are *you* going to live my life? You tell me that I shall be unhappy. Well, let us admit that. But I shall be a thousand times more so in relinquishing Otto's love, in growing old alone, far from him."

"Who can say what the morrow will bring forth?"

"And you, father, what would you say if I thought that, loving mother as you did, you were capable of marrying another woman? . . . No, I alone will be responsible for my conduct; I alone must be the judge."

"You forget that, in the absence of respect, you owe me obedience. I shall oppose this marriage."

"You will not drive me to extremities. You will

not force me to employ the means which the Code gives me."

"Marthe!" exclaimed M. Ellangé in a hard tone.

And the pained voice of the mother echoed:

"Marthe!"

"Pardon, father, but I shall resort to the summonses,[1] if necessary."

M. Ellangé clenched his fists and, sternly regarding his daughter, defied her. Silently, she braved the look. Then the father's anger subsided and he was filled with bitterness.

"Marthe," he said, "you pain me terribly!"

An abyss separated them. Painfully he measured the eternal disagreement, the fatal gulf which lies between two generations: the old people turned towards yesterday, the young ones towards to-morrow. With his whole strength he held on to the past, clung to the present, from which — rushing to the future — she was detaching herself. They ceased to see what, taking things as a whole, united them, and turned over and over again in their minds, down to the very smallest detail, that which divided them. They were doubtful, at that moment, of their very affection for each other. And whilst he regarded her as ungrateful, she accused him, with rancour, of egoism.

Nervously, the Major was lashing with the end

[1] The three *sommations* which the French law entitles sons and daughters who are of age to serve upon parents who refuse to give their consent to a marriage.— Translator.

of his stick an innocent arborescent fern. But as this was quite ineffectual he coughed and said with authority:

"Lucien, my boy, my consent is as necessary as yours, isn't it? You set me on one side, but I'm the one who has a right to the first word."

M. Ellangé, troubled, contemplated him. He had for his father a veneration which, after it had reached its culminating point, age was diminishing. The old man was declining. What was he going to say?

The Major tapped Marthe's cheek.

"There, little girl,— there's my benediction. I authorise this marriage. War, frontiers, and races, — all that is well known. But in reality there are only men and women,— everywhere the same. And you may believe me when I tell you that I've seen a fair number of them. You love each other,— that's the essential point. Love makes up for everything."

And turning towards M. Ellangé he added:

"Learn that, conscript."

The Procurator sought in his wife's eyes for assistance. But Mme. Ellangé, conquering her agitation, could only stammer:

"Listen, Lucien. Since Marthe has carefully reflected? . . . As for me, terrible though this separation will be . . ."

Already her daughter was seated beside her, encircling her waist with a coaxing arm. M. Ellangé,

with a reproving air, indicated some passers-by who were noticing them.

"Come along, let us go further off. This scene is ridiculous."

A terrible struggle was taking place within him. Silently, in a group, they took a few steps. At last M. Ellangé broke the heavy silence.

"Very well! You all desire it. I give way."

"Ah! Father . . ."

"But against my will and convinced . . ."

Clasping her hands, Marthe exclaimed:

"Torture me no more!"

He inclined with an ill grace.

"It is over. You can marry when you like. In warning you I have carried out my duty."

He was so agitated that, against all the rules of decorum, he took his wife by the arm and dragged her along, but not without giving himself the pleasure of adding:

"Not a sign of Otto! All that was doubtless arranged!"

"I swear to you . . ."

Ironically, he drew forth his watch.

"A quarter to seven. The only thing we've got to do is to get to the second meeting-place. See you presently, then, if we lose each other again."

They walked on ahead. It had been arranged that, should they not be able to meet sooner, they were to dine together at the Russian restaurant, as it was quite possible that until then Otto's time

would be taken up with official visits. Marthe stepped along joyously, side by side with Frida, who was still pale owing to the shock she had received. Behind them came the Major, with his head towering above them. Proudly thrusting out his chest and sniffing the warm air, in which the setting sun suspended a golden dust, he felt that he was living a glorious hour. Purple clouds floated in the distance. A continuous roar rose from the Champ-de-Mars *en fête*. One might have supposed that it was the evening of a victory.

"Otto!" cried Marthe.

She had caught sight of him at the corner of the sea-water Aquarium. His tall figure stood out in the declining light. She loved everything about him: the swing of his robust fists and broad shoulders, the virile and reposeful air of his face enframed in a red beard, the ruddiness of his moist lips, his clear blue eyes, and his ample forehead similar to alabaster. Time and place no longer existed.

"My darling!" exclaimed Otto, pressing her hands. His eyes questioned her anxiously. She felt his dear thought descend upon her.

"You can write to your father; nothing remains to be done but to fix the date."

Their arms touched, and it seemed to them that they were but one in body. Along they walked together, insensible to everything but their ecstasy. They were alone. Frida and the Major were oblit-

erated. Later on they would find them,— enter into reality again. At present their dream filled the world. The setting sun was more beautiful to them than the dawn.

"Where are we?" inquired Marthe.

They were following a steep slope, beneath a vaulted roof through which water was oozing. Every now and then, behind sheets of thick glass, unreal visions appeared before their eyes: anfractuosities of reefs, sea-weeds waving in glaucous water, mosses, strange bushes with leaves which moved,— an entire viscous flora, and, grazing with its tail the red sponges of madreporaria, a monstrous fish which slipped along, with the flash of a fin and a jewelled stomach . . . In the depths of the earth and the sea, they wandered amidst scenes of the Apocalypse. It enveloped and obsessed them, roared above their heads. At times it appeared in its entirety between rocks and a flashing crevasse . . . There was a moving mass of hideous beasts; a confusion of living vegetable matter, with shadows and flames,— the whole of the unknown and the infinite . . . A sense of anguish oppressed them, - an indefinite and delicious fear, mingled, nevertheless, with the feeling that they were two and that they were strong.

On once more, at the exit to the cavern, coming into the light of day, and into the presence of the movement and noise of the world, they took breath. They re-discovered the Universe. The lawn before

them was a green savanna, a poplar tree, a whole forest. Their blood coursed triumphantly through their veins. The sky, a very pale green in the west, had become the darkest amethyst at the zenith. Their moist foreheads and hands felt the approach of the caress of night. Night — still invisible — mingled with the last reflections of day. But every one already felt its presence and summoned it.

When the lovers passed in front of the building where the humming birds were housed, the charming little creatures were beginning, in their tall glass cages, to go to sleep. A few, with feeble cries, were still fluttering about, their sparkling wings resembling flying rubies, emeralds and sapphires — precious stones which one by one melted into nothing.

One by one the lights began to come out in the darkness, and from all sides arose the sound of human voices, songs and bands. Soon the deep blue velvety sky was entirely covered, as though scattered with diamonds. Paris, in the distance, was lighting up. The exhibition formed a single con ·ation. There were lights everywhere,— in festo geometrical lines, garlands and bouquets. Rockets went up, bursting into balls and raining sparks. Huge lighthouses, revolving and fixed, shot forth long yellow streaks of light . . . It was a hallucinatory and sudden piece of magic, clothed in the dazzling brilliancy of a fairy tale.

"Babylon!" thought Otto. Buried in the crowd, they advanced towards their destiny.

"My darling!" said Otto from time to time.

"My darling!" replied Marthe.

Then they became silent, the better to relish their happiness.

II

THE servant placed upon the table the hollow dish upon which was piled the steaming pyramid of loeberknödel.

"They are magnificent," declared the pastor. "Did you preside at their preparation, Marthe?"

"Who else could have done so?" cried Frida Lehmann, enthusiastically.

The pastor wagged his head.

"Oh! I know quite well. There is not the equal of our dear daughter in any household in Marburg."

His light eyes, in a large fat face, sparkled with joy. His large white beard, cut square, like Otto's, spread out on his napkin, which, in order to protect his best garments, he had slipped between the collar of his long frock-coat and his waistcoat. Rudheimer did not look his sixty years. His shoulders were square, his complexion florid, his air cordial, in spite of the authority attached to his ministry.

"Magnificent!" repeated the pastor's wife. "Our little Marthe is now quite an accomplished housewife."

"Thanks to your teaching, mother."

Frau Rudheimer, wearing a puce-coloured silk

bodice on which reposed three festoons of a heavy gold chain with flat links, and whose double chin folded on to a large cameo-brooch which ornamented her collar, accepted the compliment modestly. With the same affectionate look she took in her son and daughter-in-law, who, radiating happiness and health, formed a fine couple. Any prejudices which she may have had — her fear of French frivolity, mockery and independence,—had vanished. Marthe had, in short, fashioned herself in strict conformity with her conjugal existence. She brought to bear upon it the seriousness and modesty of a true German. She listened to advice with deference and followed it with good humour . . . Whilst slowly eating, Frau Rudheimer praised her for the correct preparation of the forcemeat balls. Only an expert hand could have thus amalgamated the bread, the milk, the calf's liver, the suet, the eggs and the flour, without forgetting the onions, parsley, garlic, thyme and nutmeg. . . . It was indeed perfect.

"Is it not, Frida?"

Fräulein Lehmann admitted the fact without difficulty, and even found a flattering word for the succulence of the soup in which these melting loeberknödel had cooked. And, leaning back in her chair, with its carved wooden back, she thus summed up the feeling of every one!

"How agreeable it is, my dear friends, to have

such a family gathering as this and to taste a permissible joy on so fine a fête day!"

Spring entered through the open window. A marvellous change had taken place in the weather after the severe winter, with its snow and fog. The sound of Easter bells came through the already warm air, for this end of April, as Otto remarked, was astonishingly mild. The scent of the gardens of Marburg, where the trees, like large pink and white bouquets, were everywhere in flower, was wafted from the side of the hill. They could not see, from their seats, the old quarter of the Burgerstrasse overhanging the town; but they could imagine the ancient little city climbing the steep slope with its venerable houses, the picturesque mass of its gables and turrets, its enclosures and parks, and, flowing at the bottom, the blue Lahn, with the two towers of St. Elizabeth launching their spires heavenward like prayers. The three Rudheimers and Frida felt a gentle emotion stir them on calling this image to their minds. This was their native land, the blessed place of their childhood. They loved these trees and these stones, which had seen them born and grow up,— these trees and stones among which they were peaceably growing old and which would see them die. All these things, possessed of souls, had been loved and contemplated before them by their parents and grand-parents, who had also come under their charm. Thus had been

formed, thus had been perpetuated between this landscape full of recollections and those who now lived there a solid chain, the heavy weight of which each bore cheerfully.

Although Marthe had not the same reasons for feeling affected, she unreservedly relished the joy of that minute. She gave a thought to the members of her own family and imagined the occupation of each at that moment. What were they doing? She calculated the difference in the hours, for never now did her acts concord with theirs. . . . But what did the vain tick-tack of clocks signify, provided that hearts always beat in unison? Doubtless her people were leaving church after mass. She could see her mother walking majestically along, leaning on the arm of the Imperial Procurator. The fulness of the crinoline obliged them to keep their distance; the points of the lace basquines stood out on the rustling silk, which bulged like a bell. Behind them came Louis, in his fashionably cut coat. He was thrusting out his chest, and had the air of saying: "Signed Dusautoy." Jacques, whose gallooned kepi made him taller than his brother, and who looked exceedingly smart in his bran new lieutenant's uniform, on which the Mexico medal shone, strode along, curling his moustache and saluting the ladies. The Major would be found in the Rue des Trois Cailloux counting his hundred paces.

How far off it all was! She could discover no

change in her affection, for she possessed one of those hearts which give themselves once for all, and on which neither distance nor absence has any influence. She asked herself if it were not another person who had thus crossed so many times, on Sundays, the narrow little Cathedral Square; — she or another who, in the lofty nave filled with song and light, had followed the touching service; — she or another who had passed and motioned to all those people whose names and faces were so familiar to her but whose bodies now seemed abolished; — she or another who had occupied, in the familiar and silent home, that Louis XVI wainscotted bedroom, the greenish windows of which looked on to the Boulevard du Mail?

Her real existence dated from the day on which she entered Otto's house. In changing from one country to another had she not found a new family and a new fatherland? . . . To her the past existed only in an affectionate recollection of her grandfather, mother, father and brothers. . . . As regards the remainder of her previous life, nothing remained save a clear-cut vision, but one as detached from her and as dry as the bark which falls from the verdant trunks of plane-trees. It seemed to her that she possessed a new skin, and that, whether looking backwards or around her, she looked upon the world with different eyes.

Through a mullioned window, enframing a large expanse of sky, she perceived in the distance the

Hessian territory, with its blue line of forests and mountains. It seemed to her that she had never known any other horizon. Much more than the cold narrow streets of Amiens and the flat valley of the Somme did she love the tortuous lanes of Marburg, its steep ascents and flights of steps. Here and there, between the polished cobblestones, grass was sprouting. As to sidewalks, there were none. In the centre of each thoroughfare either the greasy water from kitchens or the rain water trickled or rushed along. There was so little space between the houses that their summits touched. Corpulent, leaning and squat, with pots of flowers adding a touch of green or red to their black stone façades, they had the air of very old people standing badly in line. Some drew up their lean figures under gables with tiers which capped them with pointed bonnets; others, broad and low, squatted down, under projecting roofs, in dirty coloured dresses,—ancient coatings of dark ochre, faded apple green and pink changed to yellow. At times the fresh foliage of a nasturtium twined around delicate Gothic columns. Birds in cages chirruped on window-sills. Here and there on cracked walls and Gothic galleries were sculptured beams, grimacing sign-boards suspended from iron bars, or gargoyles representing chimerical animals with wide-open mouths. Rare shops, resembling mousetraps, invited you to enter their dark interiors, level with the pavement. From the thirteenth to the eight-

eenth century, from the top to the bottom of the hill, ancestral mansions had succeeded each other, and which still witnessed to the past. The castle of the Dukes of Thuringe dominated the whole with its lordly mass.

When taking a walk amidst this architectural labyrinth, Marthe figured to herself that she was wandering in a legendary world. Scattered here and there were gardens, in which lime-trees or the straight blackness of a yew towered above the summits of the buildings. Grasses decked the ruin of a wall and on the top reddened the fine stalks of parietaria. A lizard darted under a velvety brown moss. Then she would step on to a post, or else, at a turning, stop. Suddenly the whole panorama of Marburg was stretched out before her,— the houses tier above tier, the winding, glittering Lahn below, with its surrounding fields and alleys, and the pleasant view of neighbouring ridges; the Augustenberg, the Landberg, the Frauenberg and the Kirchspitze. . . . So great a harmony, so sweet a character of peace and nobility enveloped these spots that invincibly they evoked, in Marthe's memory, one of those landscapes which we see in the pure pictures of the early Italian painters: a fortified town of Italy, suspended on some mountain side in Tuscany or Umbria. . . . These were corners of dreamland in which, when young, she loved to place a life, and where, behold, she was now living her own!

"And now," inquired Frida, mindful of her be-

setting sin, "what dish is worthy of crowning the feast?"

"Are you not ashamed, dear Fräulein Lehmann," said Herr Rudheimer, jokingly, "to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord in so material a manner? Can you really have the vestige of an appetite left?"

"That depends on the entremets," she replied. "I must confess that looking for the eggs under the box-trees of the labyrinth has made me ferociously hungry. Diabolically, Otto strewed them about all the walks in the garden. I collected a fairly good number."

She pointed to a pile of coloured sugar eggs on the sideboard,— eggs of all sizes, from that of an ostrich to those of the lapwing. Watching over them, with ears erect, was a cardboard hare, which she was very proud of having discovered among the cabbages in the kitchen-garden.

Since her departure for France in 1859, this was the first Easter fête she had spent in Marburg. Ten years older, she imagined she was thirty years younger,— that she had become a child again. Her child-like soul was visible in the candour of her eyes. She had very quickly become accustomed again to the old atmosphere, to those customs which she had but momentarily thrown aside, and which, by a thousand invisible bonds, are attached to the blood. Her vivacity, like her breadth of mind, due to the opening up of another horizon and contact with another people, had slackened, had contracted to the

dimensions of her original circle. Dulled, incurious, she read no more, thought less, and had become once more, during the year she had reinhabited Marburg, a provincial old maid. She had followed Marthe there in the spring of 1868, the date of the marriage.

Frau Rudheimer winked in the direction of the kitchen door, and indicating the servant who appeared with a large soup tureen, said:

"Ah! Ah! Frida, let us wager that this is a Biersuppe."

But Fräulein Lehmann smiled at this jest. No, delicious as a good beer soup might be when cooked with plenty of butter and sugar, flour and cream, beaten eggs and raisins, a little vanilla and lemon; — no, it could not be that! . . . Marthe could never have committed the heresy of terminating a meal with a dish that ought to come at the beginning. And Frida, counting on one of those "delicacies" in the preparation of which her pupil excelled, licked her lips in advance.

"A simple Dampfundeln," said Marthe gaily, "but prepared in the Silesian manner."

"That is also estimable, is it not?" exclaimed Otto, as he fetched from the dessert table a venerable long-necked bottle of Rhine wine, with the wax so old that it could no longer be distinguished from the dusty covering.

With a spoon Marthe dexterously cut into the dome of light pastry, cooked in steam.

"Will that do?" she asked Fräulein Lehmann as she handed her a huge plateful. "A little more sauce?"

And with a liberal hand she poured the melted butter on to the enormous slice. Meanwhile Otto, holding the bottle between his knees, carefully uncorked it. Then, having smelt at the cork, he slowly poured the topaz-coloured wine into the engraved green Bohemian glasses, at the same time respectfully announcing:

"Liebfraumilch, 1844."

"The year of my birth," murmured Marthe.

All, raising their glasses, smelt at the wine's bouquet, whilst Herr Rudheimer, as in reason bound, proposed a solemn toast. Looking at his son and turning towards Marthe, he said in a slightly trembling voice:

"To another and as happy a birth!"

She bowed her head and all drank in silence.

When they had set down their glasses Herr Rudheimer drew his wife's attention, by means of a glance, to Otto and Marthe, whose eyes had not left each other. With a grave smile on their faces, they were following together the great road of the future. Doubtless, full of religious faith in life, they were imagining in the distance, gambolling before them, the son who would be born of their flesh and who in his turn would bear the name and soul of a Rudheimer? . . . Then, like a reflection, the same smile came over the faces of the pastor and his wife,

animating their pale features, fatigued by age. That minute was so rich in thought, so consoling and so deep that no word could express it.

But Frida, after a fairly long interval, broke the charm.

"In my turn I will propose other toasts. Why should we drink only one? We mustn't stop when we're on so good a road. My dear Marthe, my dear Otto . . . to the health of all the little Rudheimers who will make their appearance! . . . At least, I hope so!"

All then laughed heartily. And Herr Rudheimer declared that it was evident, judging by the turn of Fräulein Lehmann's wit, how much she had frequented good French — he might even say Gallic — society.

But Otto had now risen, and, pouring out a bumper to each, proposed that they should pledge the One who dispensed all good things, the Lord who had brought them together and in whose hand their fate rested. He lent a favourable ear to all just prayers, under whatever name he was evoked, provided they were offered up with sincerity and fervour. Thus spoke Otto, in a spirit of comprehension and tolerance, as much for the Catholic Marthe and the Calvinist Frida as for themselves, Lutherans. Herr Rudheimer, imitated by all, pushed back his chair and, upright, sang the words of the psalm, beginning:

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott. . . .

Affectionately, Marthe had taken Otto's hand. She pressed it within hers. Never had any disagreement arisen nor would arise between them on that subject. She was grateful to her husband and father-in-law for never having sought to interfere with her religious views. She continued to carry out regularly her Sunday duties at the little church where the Latin form of worship was celebrated. Hardly more than four or five hundred worshippers assembled there, the eight thousand other inhabitants of Marburg all professing — with the exception of a few dissenters like Frida — the same faith as the Rudheimers. Sometimes Otto accompanied his wife to mass, and more often still she followed him to the service at Saint Elizabeth's,— especially when Herr Rudheimer was preaching. In spite of the coldness of the ceremony, the old cathedral, consecrated to protestantism for the past four centuries, still exhaled that catholic ardour whence, all in one piece, and the first of the Gothic churches of Germany, before Mainz, before Köln, it had sprung. It was still so beautiful, there arose from its three naves so pure, its forest of columns, and its luminous stained-glass windows such an impression of peace, grandeur and harmony that Marthe's happiness expanded there more freely. Thus, notwithstanding the difference in the communion, they still communicated in the beauty of art and in the profundity of religion. . . . Did they not aim at the same goal? . . . Consequently what did the

form signify? Love dazzled, with an equal light, their minds, eager to become one. . . .

When, after having conducted their parents home, Otto and Marthe, in company with Frida found themselves on the uneven pavement of the Engelgasse, they decided to descend as far as the Wehrda road, in order to enjoy the last beautiful hours of the day walking in the country. But Fräulein Lehmann began to groan. Her stomach! . . . Short-winded, she feared the rough way back. She would call, in passing, at the house of her friend, the wife of Dr. Trammer, Lector publicus der Musik und Universitäts Musik Direktor. For the digestion there was nothing like the beatitude of hearing Herr Trammer execute one of Bach's fugues on the piano. . . . Hands crossed on the stomach and head leaning on the back of a velvet-covered chair,— what a good position that was for wandering, in liberty, in the infinite lands of reverie! That was worth all the walks to Wehrda.

On leaving her, Marthe embraced her old friend tenderly. But that did not prevent her, as soon as the door was closed, from seizing Otto's arm and pressing it against her heart.

"How glad I am," she said, "to be alone with you at last!"

However, Frida's presence had at first been infinitely useful to her, although she had never realised it, so much was she absorbed by her affection for Otto. Fräulein Lehmann had softened the first

trying hours away from the old home. She had acclimatised Marthe to usages which, had she been left to herself, she would have found much more angular. Thanks to Frida, a little of the atmosphere of the past and of Amiens had followed her,— just sufficient to assist her in becoming accustomed to the present, to those manners which she had seen but imperfectly during her preceding sojourns, and to which it was now necessary she should strictly adhere, in order to be happy. She had come to the wise determination never to draw comparisons,— that was the surest means of avoiding regret. She had endeavoured to understand the why and the wherefore of each thing and being; and consequently she had succeeded in extracting from things as from beings the good which they contained. Convinced that happiness consisted in being satisfied with what one possessed, especially when one at last possessed the thing one had so much desired, she limited her joy to making Otto content, and all the more willingly since she experienced that perfect happiness, the supreme dream of every woman,— that of being loved unreservedly.

Along the narrow street, intersected here and there by steps, a crowd in its Sunday clothes was marching: Hessian foot-soldiers, University professors, and students with Absalom-like hair. Many of the last named bore on their foreheads the scars of their duels, and proudly they displayed in their caps, which varied according to their associations,

the colours of their beer-houses. The April sun covered the entire town with a mantle of light, woven with so virgin a gold that it gave the oldest faces among the houses an air of festiveness and to the promenaders the radiance of dawn. It was the spring-tide of souls and of the earth.

As they proceeded on their way Otto and Marthe were continually exchanging salutations. The Rector and his wife passed along in a track of respect; a grammar-school professor gave way to some holder of one of the chairs of the four faculties; or some official of the old Court, having retained his position in the new Prussian administration, measured out inclinations of the head to his subordinates. A narrow hierarchy, against which Marthe, formerly so rebellious, no longer thought of striving, regulated all relations. Otto, the only son of an old family of pastors, Privatdocent of the Faculty of Medicine, and above all the best known medical practitioner of the town, enjoyed great consideration in this little Lutheran and university centre. As in many other towns of Germany, existence turned around the academic city. Founded in 1527, a hundred years before that of Giessen, its neighbour and rival, the University was the heart and brain of Marburg.

Marthe had ended by being as familiar with the customs of this little world as the sister of a first-year student named Fuchs, who was intoxicated with servitude and pride. The " fox " of the Mar-

burg beer-houses, where a beer already renowned in the days of Erasmus was drunk in litre tankards, was the " melon " of the Saint Cyr promotions. . . . Her brother had formerly related these tribulations to her. There was the same obedience due to older students, the same pranks and practical jokes. . . . She re-discovered, in her husband's recollections, that curious assemblage of passive discipline and grotesque authority which provided amusement for both classes of youths,— that of the German Universities being still more militarised than that of the French military school. She knew in detail the composition of each Burschenschaft, and in what respect these middle-class corporations differed from the Verein, into which only noblemen were admitted. She was acquainted with the colours of their scarves and caps, the order observed in their processions, the smoke-filled rooms which served as their headquarters, as a storeroom for their flags and as a meeting-place for their carousals. She was aware of the uproar which took place there when a Commers summoned the Burschenschaft to a solemn fête. The drinking songs followed one after the other and the voices, taking up the refrain, made the window-panes of the beer-house tremble again and again. Those were the days of great orgies, when the ground was strewn with drunken sleepers.

She was astonished that so cultivated a people, and whose great genius she admired in philosophy, literature and music, could form its youth with such

low pleasures. Twice a week, roared at the top of the voice amidst the silence of the winter evenings, did she hear the regulation couplet — *Gaudeamus igitur — juvenes dum sumus* . . . rise from the neighbouring Kneipe; or else the chorus whose words, in spite of herself, she scanned: —

Sa! Sa! Sa! German brothers,
Send forth a joyous hurrah,
Sing your songs the gayest,
And let him with a voice be heard.
Here, in the midst of beer jugs,
The sickened heart finds hope and health.
Oh! divine beer,
The delight of life,
The giver of a thousand joys!

Otto, recollecting his own follies, motioned indulgently with his head. Had these prevented him from loving science and succeeding in life? It was in rubbing shoulders at the heavy tables of the Kneipe that the brotherly *camaraderie* of those students who had come from every corner of Germany had been cemented. It was labour and pleasure in common which, from town to town and from state to state, had woven the solid bond between brains and hearts. All the universities formed but a single crucible, in which the genius of the nation, in a state of formation, bubbled. From the dross and pure metal would be forged, would issue forth, as a whole, the teutonic fatherland. . . . But, none the less, Marthe gave a start when the brutal uproar broke upon their quiet, lamp-lit evening in-

timacy, either when she was playing to her husband his favourite sonatas, Beethoven or Haydn, or continuing the reading of some book which she had begun. Every evening, when she did not open her piano, she read aloud, alternating German classics with the latest Parisian novels. She was astonished that she did not take the same interest in the latter as she had formerly done, accustomed as she now was to think in German and to employ her mother tongue only when she wrote to her family, or when, from time to time, she spoke with Frida or Otto. The latter often begged her to speak French, in order that he might be kept in practice. But ordinarily it was always in German that they exchanged their impressions,— wove between them the fine tapestry of life, with its thousand little threads. It was in German also that they commented on their reading, widened the common field on which their minds found a harvest, and where, happy in the feeling that they had each other's confidence, that they were discoverers together and were reciprocally enriched, they wandered.

"Halt!" commanded Otto. "Turn and look! Isn't that equal to the prettiest corner of France?"

They had reached the rose garden which surrounds the Cathedral, and where the buds had already begun to make their appearance. The tall spires, surmounted by the knight and the star, stood out, jet black, against the indigo-coloured sky. The fresh grass was gemmed with primroses. Noisy

sparrows settled and flew here and there in flocks. Their young fought on the windows, full of nests, on the trilobate galleries, in the hollows of the statues and the gargoyles.

Docilely, Marthe turned round. Marburg lay spread out on the promontory of its hill, with the massive towers of its castle, its bell-turrets and its roofs. It might have been likened, with its azure shield, its renascent gardens and its snowy orchards, to the picture of an ancient town, a blue and gold miniature on the large page of a missal. In the background waved the wooded heights, the dark chain of mountains on which the new foliage, like rustling lace-work, had hardly as yet turned green.

"I know nothing more enchanting and more delicate," she confessed. "One can understand why Elizabeth of Hungary chose to end her life here."

Through everywhere encountering reminders of the Saint, she had come to love her sweet face. It was not without surprise, mingled with sympathy, that she thought of that life tormented by a mystic demon. She attempted to evoke the long face enframed by plaited tresses, the hands joined in prayer on the flat bodice, the eyes shining with faith and renunciation. . . . A strange story, that of this child of royal blood who at fourteen years of age married the landgrave of Thuringe and set an example on the throne of all the virtues. A widow at twenty and despoiled by her brother-in-

law, she refused the support of the barons, abandoned her three daughters, devoted herself to the service of the lepers and poor of Marburg, and died in 1231, at twenty-four years of age, in abject and sublime poverty. . . . What celestial vision, what infatuation of the infinite ravaged this soul, a prey to absolute detachment from her century and the earth? . . . Otto, on the contrary, in the rigour of his protestantism, could not understand the attraction of this romantic figure; he could understand neither the idolatry with which Germany, including Luther, had surrounded her memory, nor the Emperor Frederic II laying a golden crown on her reliquary, nor the affluence of pilgrims around her venerated remains. . . .

Limited by his scientific education, as well as by the austerity of his faith, to that which his reason alone could admit, he laughed at the idea of so-called miracles and at the story of the saint's body distilling a perfumed oil. . . . As in the days of the Reform, he felt that he possessed something of the savage soul of Philip of Hesse, when he tore away the relics from the sanctuary. . . . In this matter he retained the disputatious severity which had animated his ancestors in the far-off days when the Castle of Marburg had hummed with meetings, when, in the Knights Chamber, Luther and Zwingle, Melanchthon and Œcolampadius dissertated on points of doctrine. . . .

"Ah!" he said, "it is a long time since you men-

tioned St. Elizabeth. . . . Let us wager that you found again this morning, in the depths of a cupboard, M. de Montalembert's book?"

"Quite true," she said.

Marthe laughed with a good grace, although she could hardly explain, in the case of so intelligent a man as Otto, this sort of incomprehension regarding a particular point. One of the rare fits of temper to which she had seen him give way since her arrival at Marburg had been caused by this innocent biography. She had brought it from Amiens, with a few other volumes, curious to re-read on the spot the history of the Saint, with whom she had become infatuated on the occasion of her first visit. . . . But coldly Otto had taken it from her hands, giving her Goethe's *Faust* in its place.

"The mind," he had said, "must be nourished with marrow and not with a meagre diet."

And he himself had placed Montalembert on the topmost shelf of a dusty cupboard. She decided that she would put it back again that very evening. . . . Let Elizabeth of Hungary once more go to sleep in the past! She had no desire to enter on a struggle, on account of another. . . . Present happiness alone counted; the essential thing was to preserve it intact. Her love, so robust, appeared to her to be as delicate as a hot-house flower. She spared it every shock. She tended it as though it were a fragile plant.

Whilst they were directing their steps towards

the ramparts and the low gate, a very old woman who was passing raised her arms in the air on perceiving Otto.

"It is Mother Krautzheim," said Marthe.

"Herr doctor! Herr doctor!" stammered the aged dame, who was almost bent double. "I was on my way to your house. The mother of the little one is very ill."

She pointed to a rolled-up form, hanging from her neck in a sort of rough cloth apron, which beat against her side. It was the child, carried in the Marburg fashion. Otto had never been able to get mothers to leave their new-born babes in their cradles, rather than trail them about in this manner, like animals.

"I've told you a hundred times not to carry your grandson in this way."

"Give him to me," said Marthe.

Followed by the distrustful eye of the old woman, who regretfully gave up her charge, she raised the infant and, as it opened, then closed its eyes again, laid it to sleep in her arms. Maternally she embraced this morsel of warm flesh and blood, in which the fire of life, like a spark under cinders, smouldered. What, she thought, would this flame become?

"Are you willing?" consulted Otto.

"To be sure!" she replied.

Spontaneously she abandoned their walk. Otto liked this cheerful sacrifice. Never had she mur-

mured when the necessities of his profession called him, at all hours of the day and night, away from home. By her good humour and foresight, she lightened his hard work. On returning he ever found his pipe ready and his slippers warming near the china stove. . . . She welcomed him with a tender smile, taking an interest in his patients, in the success of his treatment. She participated in his acts of charity. What profession was equal to his, for its constant altruism, its obscure and entire devotion?

Without a word, they followed the old woman. Passing around the railings of the rose garden, they entered the little square which separates the Cathedral from the river. Centenary constructions bordered the narrow area: black and dismal walls, all emblazoned with sculptured coats-of-arms. These were the remains of the convent and hospital formerly founded by St. Elizabeth, and which for a long time had served as the seat of the Grand Bailiwick of the Teutonic Order. They enclosed nothing more now than solitude and ruin. On penetrating it seemed as though one was entering the mouldy air, the darkness of a cellar. A stall backed on to the dark infirmary, the ornamented gable of which stood out against the sky. On entering this necropolis, Marthe stooped her shoulders, as though she felt the weight of poverty and death upon them. A continuous rattle came through the half-open door.

When she had crossed the threshold she could, at first, distinguish nothing. Hardly any daylight entered through the window and the door, which the old woman had hastily pushed to, as though she feared that some one invisible would slip in behind them. Marthe first of all laid her load in the worm-eaten wooden cradle against which she had stumbled. The awakened child looked around, astonished; then, drooling, began to suck his wooden rattle. Hoarse and breathless, the complaint continued to rise from the pallet which Marthe could now distinguish and over which Otto was leaning. At the bottom of the room, a candle in a copper candlestick, shedding a faint light, stood on the mantel of a high fireplace, where, at the end of an immense pot-hook, a very small black stew-pot was hanging over a peat fire. The silence, broken by the regular panting of the sick woman, weighed heavily. Otto rose, shaking his head. He was holding, now, the wasted wrist, feeling the pulse, watch in hand. Marthe looked with pity on the pale face lying back on the cushion, on the haggard, feverish eyes.

"Well, Herr doctor?" moaned the old grandmother in her tremulous voice.

In his rough manner, Otto recomforted her. Give him time to return home, and he would come back with a calmative draught which would work marvels. . . . Meanwhile, his wife would remain there, to look after the mother and the little one.

. . . And the milk, was there any left? . . . No? He would bring some back then.

"You hear, Marthe; I shall return."

He gave her a significant look. . . . Let them at least soften this sorrowful end, assist these poor despairing folk!

"Go! I will wait for you," she said.

Marthe knew the sad story of these women.

Mother Krautzheim, penniless, lived on public charity, alone in the world with her grand-daughter. The girl, an orphan, one of the workers in a china manufactory, had been seduced and abandoned by a young man of Cassel. . . . And now the mother was about to die from peritonitis. . . . Only the old woman and the little one would be left. . . . Marthe dangled the medal attached to her gold bracelet above the cradle. The chubby baby responded by kicking with his little legs in the swaddling clothes, drooling more than ever, and laughing heartily. His chuckling alternated with the low breathing of the dying mother. . . . Silent and with a vacant eye the grandmother sat in front of the hearth, watching the smoking peat.

When Otto returned in three quarters of an hour with a bottle of milk and the medicine the sick woman, covered with perspiration, had become restless. The vomiting had come on again. . . . Unconscious, she drank the sleeping mixture; then fell back, as though dead. Quickly the doctor slipped a little money into the old woman's hand; then, with

disguised haste, man and wife slowly left the room.

The light of day appeared to them to be a deliverance.

"Poor people!" said Marthe.

And with more fervour than she had ever shown up to then, she again pressed her heart against her husband's arm. A great desire to support herself against his strength came over her. She would have liked also to press him in her arms, with all her tenderness.

"How good you are!" she sighed.

On St. Elizabeth's Square fair, plump girls with little black velvet caps and short ample skirts were passing and singing. Their calves swelled out their white stockings; their feet, in buckled shoes, tripped here and there. How they would dance that evening! . . . Ardently, gravely, Marthe thought of the burning breath which was about to cease on the pallet and of the young life which lay in the cradle. . . . With a supple step she adapted herself to Otto's slow gait; with all her being she breathed in the mildness of the spring, the clear beauty of that Easter evening, that hour when she descended to the depths of human suffering and once more gained a foothold on the divine throne of love.

III

Hours, days and months passed, strengthening between them the bond of tastes and habits. Marthe had now become quite accustomed to her new life,— a real Hessian lady. She was no longer observed in the streets of Marburg, where, during the first year, her lively step and French dress had attracted attention. The wife of the Rector and the wife of the Universitäts Musik Direktor bowed to the wife of Privatdocent Otto Rudheimer as to one of themselves. She had renounced light colours and adopted the chestnut-coloured silk which went with the colour of her hair and eyes. Like Frau Rudheimer she wore a gold chain crosswise and a brooch at her neck: a large enamel and amethyst medallion. On opening it, there was to be seen inside, in one of the frames, a small photograph of Otto, and in the other, a little curl of red hair, tied with a blue ribbon,— a souvenir which she owed to the kindness of her mother-in-law.

Just as she had become inured to all the forms of material existence — in the case of some of them it had not been without difficulty: what sleepless nights, for instance, she had passed on her narrow bed with its hard mattress, its napkins instead of

sheets and its eiderdown in place of blankets! — so had she adapted herself to all the shades of moral existence. . . . Little by little she became impregnated with her surroundings,— that atmosphere of austere labour, familiar simplicity, and lutheran gravity. She had become more serious and reflective, and, since she was severe to herself, severe to others. She judged French matters and the little family events, which were regularly announced to her in her mother's and brothers' letters, with a remoteness and elevation which made her more exacting. She regretted nothing of the past. Her existence was henceforth attached to that of Otto, like the ivy to a tree.

She loved her home, Marburg and Hesse as much as though she had been born there. She took an interest in local history, in the formation and development of her new country,— little Thuringe and big Germany. She saw no further than the present hour. Was not the entire future contained in their affection? How could anything apart from her home life affect her? Every sun which rose seemed to her a new century. Every day was a repetition of the one that had gone before.

Summer had come and the university had closed its doors. And as Frau Rudheimer had for some time past complained of increasing anemia, Otto decided that a salt water cure would do her good. What had Marthe to say to the idea of taking the old folks to Nauheim, at the foot of Taunus?

Afterwards, by the Mayn-Weser line, they could reach Frankfort, whence they would mount the Rhine, as far as Basel. And from there they would leave for Italy. . . . Unless, when at Strasburg, they preferred to make for Paris and Amiens?

They were taking their coffee and milk, with slices of bread and honey, on the balcony of their dining-room when Otto, whilst filling his first pipe, made this proposal.

"Italy! Italy!" unhesitatingly cried Marthe, clapping her hands.

The idea of having her dear Otto more to herself than ever, and amidst the wonders of such a journey, intoxicated her. Doubtless she was satisfied with her present existence; she shared her husband with her parents-in-law without jealousy. But the hours when others were present formed but the envelope of her happiness; — her happiness consisted of those which they spent alone. It was then that Otto showed real animation. A young face, ever ready to smile or laugh, was hidden under his ordinary appearance, under his professional mask.

He was not the same man, but a big amorous child, whose vivacity rendered his modest tenderness still more seductive.

He took a long draw at his pipe and slowly puffed out the blue smoke.

"Italy!" he murmured.

To his German eyes, accustomed to rude climates,

this country, with its golden plains, its lovely sky, its towns so full of poetry and art, was an eternal mirage. What a joy it would be to discover all this together!

"When shall we leave?" she cried. "To-morrow? Immediately?"

"Give me time to finish my pipe."

She had risen and run to the large wardrobe in the corridor. What dresses should she take with her? This one,—and this one too! Muslin and white lace petticoats were raised in the air. . . .

"Ah! here is the one I wore on that great day at the Exhibition when we fixed the date of our marriage. Do you remember?"

"Darling! Darling!"

"I have never put it on since. That is two years ago already."

She threw back her head. Otto was behind her. She felt his beloved hands on her waist, his warm breath playing with the silky hair on the nape of her neck. He covered the amber-coloured skin below her ear with little kisses.

"Stop! You are tickling me!"

She returned all his kisses by a single kiss, and with an arm around his neck placed her head upon his shoulder.

"Listen. We'll travel, on the contrary, without trunks. Luggage is terribly cumbersome. We'll each take a handbag and you your portmanteau. . . . Nothing but the clothes in which we travel.

As to linen, we'll buy it on the way. What do you say to that?"

He laughed at an idea so impulsive in its conception, so original, and, with an eye to its practical side, approved of it.

"We shall be free then and can see everything."

Marthe was filled with childish joy when the train started and the station's red mass disappeared. It had been arranged that first of all they should pass a week at Nauheim, where, in the Park-Strasse, Otto had secured rooms. But her mother-in-law had hardly begun the treatment than the thirst for travelling made Marthe extremely unsettled. Otto, busy with his rod on the banks of the Ousa, whose waters swarmed with fish, would willingly have protracted the visit. She felt she had a grudge against him for taking a pleasure in which she had no share, and for retarding, even by a few hours, that which they were to enjoy together. She felt a desire to flee and take him with her. For the first time she felt that, however complete their union might have been up to then, it contained too many foreign elements. Far from his parents and the absorbing duties of his life, Otto would belong to her all the more.

With a sigh of relief she said good-bye to the foaming springs which gush forth like snowy pyramids in the elegant yet banal park. Nauheim's pretty setting, which, with its hill and its lake, she would have liked at another time, appeared to her

to be full of the ennui of little watering-places, where sickness and nostalgia are seen on every side. Herr and Frau Rudheimer, waving their handkerchiefs on the platform, suddenly faded into the distance and were effaced. In vain did she call to memory the familiar faces of the touching old couple, as they stood side by side; she felt no other emotion, at the bottom of her heart, than that which came from habit and which was extinguished without a shock. Did not Marburg and her parents-in-law form, then, an integral part of herself? . . . She stepped away from the carriage door and closed the window. They were alone. Otto was finishing the arranging of the umbrellas and iron-pointed sticks in the light-luggage racks.

"Sit down there," she said.

Side by side, they sat in one of the corners of the compartment. The landscape flew past them. It was a delicious sensation to feel that they were immobile, yet being speedily carried away towards another world. She raised her eyes. Her husband, his arm around her waist, drew her closer towards him. *Her* world was there,— she was pressing it in her arms.

"Do you know, Otto, that we are setting out for our honeymoon?"

Contrary to custom, she had preferred, the day after the marriage in Amiens, to reach Marburg by short stages, via Strasburg, Frankfort, etc. On the third day she had entered her little house in the

Burgerstrasse and since then never left it. . . . She had decided that it would be time to travel later on, when she had become quite accustomed to her new life. . . . No dream was equal to apprenticeship to a sweet reality. Honeymoons were all very well, she thought, for those whose souls were without poetry, and who sought it far afield when, all the time, it was there, under their very eyes, in humble daily things. . . . Now that they knew each other so well that there was nothing secret between them,— now that they understood each other by a glance, would they not enjoy those hours of amusement and renewal a hundred times better? . . . Everything would be profit to their minds, accustomed to think the same.

Attracted by the magic of Italy, they decided to postpone their excursion on the banks of the Rhine until the holidays of 1870 and make straight for Basel. From there they made their way to Lucerne where the diligence, on landing at Fluelen, appeared to them, after the railway and the steamboat, a charming jump into the past. Slowly they mounted towards the St. Gothard Pass, the steep road winding through narrow gorges at the bottom of which the blue waters of the Reuss rushed and foamed among the rocks. Masses of dazzling eternal snow were suspended on the precipitous sides of the mountain. Lower down, fields of a dirty yellow colour had crumbled away, the result of a recent avalanche. . . . On raising their eyes, the moun-

tain, reaching to the skies, overhung their littleness with its formidable white mass, its chaos of ice and granite; when they were lowered, it was to measure the abyss. They drew near to each other with instinctive fear; face to face with the elements, they felt their weakness. What a little thing was human life and yet what a price it had! They left the terrible winding route with relief, and on reaching Faido, where Italy begins, once more breathed freely. The Tessin, with its enormous rocks amidst chestnut trees, seemed to them to be as sweet as an eclogue. Then the valley broadened out and descended, and they entered into the promised land.

Henceforth they were surrounded with marvels. Everything amused them: the picturesqueness of the streets and the costumes, the cooking at the *trattorie,* the good humour and volubility of the people. They spent long hours in picture-galleries, discovering, with the same beating of the heart, their favourite masterpieces. Marthe was touched by those in which human faces lived again with the most intensity. Otto preferred pictures illustrating ceremonies, manners and history. Eruditely he explained the details of these. They wandered about the rooms, according to their fancy, and without guides. Outside, at every street corner, there was again the striking evocation of former days. Ancient palaces resembling fortresses, churches full of statues and frescoes prolonged the hallucination. But above all they loved the sweetness of the coun-

try, that softness and that grandeur of line which give Italian horizons their unique character of sensual grace and beauty.

They made the acquaintance of Venice whilst she was still, on account of her recent liberation, filled with enthusiasm, of Florence whilst she was still proud of the brilliancy of her capital, of Bologna and Rome whilst they were still under Papal rule but quivering with a desire to take part in the unitary movement. Otto took a pleasure in meeting, nearly everywhere, the people of mark to whom, thanks to Marthe's and his own acquaintances, he had introductions. He took a passionate interest, like all German brains on the other side of the mountains, in the great national movement which was stirring up Italy.

"You must understand," he would say to Marthe, when they had conversed at the hotel, or at his house, with some university professor, or doctor, "that above one's native town, which is the true fatherland, there is a moral fatherland, a sort of living unity, composed of all the beings who speak the same language and have the same ideal. . . . Their agglomeration is inevitable. In spite of political contingencies, it must some day be realised. You have often expressed astonishment that a Hessian, a Pomeranian, a Saxon or a Bavarian can agree with each other, when they belong to such different nationalities. But you might just as well be astonished over the fact that Picardy, Brittany,

Anjou, Gascogne and Provence made up modern France. . . . It is now the turn of Italy and Germany."

She set aside these dreams, not because she failed to recognise that they were well-founded but because, filled with the delights of the present, she would have preferred to have enjoyed merely their own enthusiasm. She limited her happiness to the love which ceaselessly sprang from the depths of their being, to the marvellous scenery, bathed in light, in the midst of which they walked. Moreover, this intrusion of the world was accompanied by a formidable cortège of convulsions and wars; these horizons opened on a tragic story. . . . What struggles, blood and tears! What a formidable effort to bring about the slightest change! . . . She would have liked time to have suspended its flight, so that, after having lived these hours of plenitude in the land of sunshine, they could have continued, on returning to Marburg, to live their dear little life of solitude and retirement in ignorance and forgetfulness; she would have liked an equal sun to have enveloped, to the close, the serenity of their tenderness. . . .

When they mounted at Turin into the carriage which took them towards the Simplon Pass, an evening of magnificent splendour was declining on the Lombardian plain. Marthe, for no apparent reason, was sad. Her melancholy increased in proportion to Otto's contentment. He rubbed his

hands continually. . . . She contemplated him, surprised that he did not share, as usual, the same feelings as herself. . . . She could not bear him ill will for that. Was not her husband's joy caused by the legitimate pleasure of returning to his parents and the scene of their love? . . . Did not his feeling of security arise from the confidence and comfort which he found in that love? . . . And yet she could not help mildly reproaching him for neglecting to express a regret for the two months which had just gone by,— that happiest period of their lives which was now beyond recall. . . . Doubtless they would have other hours together, also touching. But would they find their penetration to be so complete, their solitude so sweet?

" Don't rub your hands that way," she said. " It annoys me."

He looked at her, surprised. He had hardly ever seen her nervous. What was the matter? She told him. But that was not a reason for being sad. He laughed loudly and rubbed his hands all the harder. It was then that she noticed, for the first time, that his hands were clumsy, with square nails, and that on the right hand, above a broad lentigo, was a tuft of red hair.

September was drawing to a close when they reentered their apartment on the Burgerstrasse. It shone like a new pin, having been freshly waxed, and was pervaded with a good odour of cleanliness. Dahlias and roses — the last of the year — were

blooming in the Delft vase on the dining-room table. Otto and Marthe's equable life recommenced. Pressing letters from Amiens summoned Marthe there in vain; she decided that her visit must be for next year. . . . After the fatigue of travelling, and her enervation having passed, she enjoyed the quietness of Marburg. A warm autumn, with skies which had a spring-like lightness, bathed the little town. Repose under these conditions was infinitely sweet. . . . She was happy, and in being alone evoked more willingly between themselves the tiny face of little Hermann, who would doubtless, at an early date, announce his presence.

Herr and Frau Rudheimer showed at regular hours their methodical persons. Marthe's affection for them did not prevent her finding in their ever-measured gestures and in their faces, which old age and austerity were hardening, something mechanical and wooden, and which made her think rather of automatons than of beings in flesh and blood. Yet, for Otto's sake, she loved them dearly. How living, on the other hand, was old Frida, notwithstanding her fifty years of age, which had turned her flaxen-hair to grey and frozen the blue liquid look in her eyes! . . . It melted when she smiled at Marthe or at a smoking, well-cooked dish. . . . Otto rejoiced in the thought that soon, on the re-opening of the university, he was to resume his lectures. This year his subject was the pathology of nervous diseases and he was devoting more time

to the preparation of his lessons. . . . At his request Marthe had more than once left him alone, to enable him to write out his notes; and he also spent part of the mornings at the university library.

She killed time by visiting the poor and the sick, to whom she brought warm clothing — knitted in view of the coming winter — soup or pastry. There was no lack of poverty and wretchedness. Many cases of misery, like that of the Krautzheim family, made her presence necessary. Since the death of the mother and grandmother, she cared no more to return to the Square of the Grand Bailiwick. But sometimes she went to see the child at the foundling hospital. The most objectionable charitable work did not repel her. She often thought that, had she been without a husband and childless, she would have loved, like St. Elizabeth, to devote herself to suffering humanity.

St. Elizabeth! More and more did the admirable church invite her to meditate there. Often, having set out for the catholic chapel, it happened that she found her feet carrying her to the cathedral square. She was never tired of admiring, up to the first gallery, the mass of square towers, flanked with pillars and turrets, whence sprang the tall octagonal pyramids, terminated with spires. Between these two gigantic towers, raised towards heaven by the ardour of mediæval faith, was the main entrance, carved with all the ingenuity, richness and elegance of Gothic art. Marthe compared

the Virgin on the tympan, holding the Divine child in her arms, and with her feet crushing sin and vice, to the most beautiful sculpture in Amiens. A vine-arbour, loaded with fruit, and a rose-tree, covered with flowers and birds, sprang from her and bent around the forms of kneeling angels.

Marthe reflected on this profound symbol. Did not this woman, with smile so pure and a curly-headed Jesus in her arms, represent sovereign maternity, to whom all nature rendered homage? Insensibly the quality of her love for Otto was modified; — as ardent as ever, it became more serious. She conceived that he was not in himself an end, but that he had an object,— an immortal one. This goal was the child, the continuation of themselves; — the child in whom their lives would be re-incarnated; — the child who was the fruit of their love and hope. . . . She did not ask herself if she loved Otto less, it seemed to her that she loved him better.

She then entered the lofty nave. A peaceful yet frigid air, the sadness of a disused temple descended from the triple roof, supported by two rows of columns. The choir alone, with its ancient stained-glass windows and the reredos of the great altar, gave the living impression of former days, retained, almost intact, the soul of past centuries, when the incense went up in smoke and the harmony of voices mingled with the sound of the organ. . . .

Seated on a chair behind a pillar, Marthe imagined that she had returned to her childhood days, when, in one of the side-aisles of Amiens Cathedral, she had long waits for the catechism and confession. . . . Who would have said then that she would live the best part of her life in a foreign town, to which she would become so accustomed that the country where she was born was now a foreign place, and whence so many events, so many ways of feeling, so many miles separated her? When she passed in front of the abandoned altars of the transept, above which curious paintings retraced the history of the saint, or when she raised her eyes to the side windows, she could not repress a feeling of anguish. Humiliation made her cheeks redden. . . . Frenchmen had mutilated these altars, these Gothic arches, the gems of these windows. During the Thirty Years' War, the soldiers of Louis XIV had established a forage depot there. Later, the commissaries of Jerome, King of Westphalia, had dragged the massive silver reliquary from the sacristy and torn one hundred and seventeen precious stones from their setting. . . . That was in the days when grandfather Ellangé, a young sub-lieutenant, fresh from the ranks of the pages, was in garrison at Marburg and, like a conqueror, made his spurs ring on the same paving-stones which she trod to-day. . . . Which of these houses had sheltered him? . . . To think that one of her family had, like

herself, been young here, that he had been victorious, loved, perhaps hated? Strange caprices of destiny! . . . Life's mysterious turning-points!

Those were the only moments when she thought of her father's predictions regarding the inevitable war between France and Prussia. . . . Prussia? Marthe, in this out-of-the-way corner Hesse, did not even know of its existence, and Marburg itself was in the same position. . . . It was always of Germany that she heard the students and professors talking,— of holy Germany, one and indivisible, and not of Prussia, whose enforced tutelage, hard and dominating spirit was not much liked in the country. War? . . . No! That was a ridiculous nightmare! . . . Her sentimentality, which had never up to then been touched, save through pride, by the recollection of the past exploits of the Major and the present and future exploits of her elder brother, was shocked at the very idea of a possible conflict between her two countries. She had formerly seen but one side of the medal: France and glory. She now saw the other side: Germany and honour. . . . But these thoughts were but passing flashes, like summer lightning across a summer sky. She threw herself back, with all the more violence, into her everyday tranquillity.

One evening, however, before her husband had returned home from his visits, she experienced a painful alarm. A letter with large blue stamps and addressed to Herr Reserve-Stabs-Arzt Otto Rud-

heimer arrived from Cassel before dinner. With distrustful fear she placed it on his napkin. What did they want with him?

"Nothing," he affirmed. "Calm yourself. The time has not yet come for me to set out for good. . . . No, no, this is nothing,— only a little manœuvring."

He exaggerated his jocular tone, but had nevertheless become a little pale at the sudden image of the Nation in arms, that Prussian nation to whose laws he submitted, but without much love. . . . It was terrible to think that he, a man of thought and science, a lover of peaceful work,— he whose efforts were ceaselessly directed towards saving a few more human lives from death, might be suddenly forced to take part in that horrible necessity, war, murderous war, and that he ought to consider it as a superior duty. He was opposed, by inclination, to the violent Prussian policy, and — one of the first victims of the bellicose ambition of Germany — he considered himself, like many Hessians of the North, much more in sympathy with his brothers across the Rhine, those of Hesse-Darmstadt, the Grand Duke of which made common cause with the sovereigns of the other Southern States.

He eagerly tore open the envelope.

"Yes, it's as I said. . . . The Cassel troops are executing an autumn manœuvre. . . . They are seizing the opportunity of testing the knowledge of the entire medical corps, with its reserve, as in time

of war. Aid on the field of battle, removal of the wounded to country hospitals, etc. I mustn't complain. This is the first time since the annexation that I have been convoked. . . . It will be necessary, all the same, to overhaul my uniform."

She dined without appetite, saddened by the thought of this unexpected separation. However, in the presence of Otto's good humour, the bad impression passed away. And she even amused herself, like a child, by taking out from the camphor-wood trunk, which was brought down on the following day from the box-room, her husband's military clothes, with the cap and short sword. She insisted on his putting them on there and then, and clapped her hands with delight. Although the buttons were tarnished and the cloth rumpled, he presented really a martial air.

He was the first to laugh, whilst curling his thick red moustache.

"Do you know," he said, "that we Hessians, descendants of the Catti, are the real Germanic heroes. It was the Catti who annihilated the legions of Varus between Ems and Lippe. Tacitus is unsparing in his praise regarding us. It is true that Tacitus, according to some people, never wrote anything but the Life of Agricola, and that his famous Annals is an apocryphal manuscript, entirely fabricated in the fourteenth century by Poggio. . . . It is imprudent to place your confidence in history."

Her good spirits having returned, Marthe herself

put her husband's uniform in order. And the convocation, feared at first, ended in a pleasure party. . . . With Frida, she accompanied Herr Reserve-Stabs-Arzt to Cassel, and whilst Otto was exercising himself in his eventual duties she visited, in company with Fräulein Lehmann, the former capital of Electoral Hesse and the kingdom of Westphalia. The museum, the Auergarten with its orangery, its ornamental waters and its bowling-greens, the Rue Royale, as brilliant as the Rue de la Paix, everything would have appeared magnificent to them if the astonishing garden of Wilhemshöhe had not, in the declining splendour of October, revealed to their admiration one of the extraordinary places of the world. Above the common-place palace, the former summer residence of the Elector, lay the prodigious park, a combination of steep mountain side and virgin forest with the arrangement of a pompous and *rococo* Versailles. In the depths of the sombre groves, they saw the grotto of Polyphemus and the cascade of Hades. Here and there, like green mirrors, shone the immense ornamental waters. The highest fountain in Europe shot upwards from the Great Lake. Marthe dragged the congested Frida from the New Cascade to the Temple of Mercury and from the Temple to the Giants' Castle. There was no respite for her until, thoroughly exhausted, they stopped near the Farnèse Hercules which crowns the castle with so formidable a mass that merely in the thickness of the thigh eight to nine

people are able, as though in a strange belvedere, to climb and stand. . . .

"I do not regret my fatigue," said Frida in the train which was taking all three of them to Marburg. "Confess that nothing equals that, neither Potsdam, nor even Versailles, and that neither Frederick the Great, nor Louis XIV, great though they may have been, did better than our little landgrave Charles?"

Otto and Marthe, with patriotic pride, agreed with her. The same evening tunic, sword and cap were replaced in the camphor-wood trunk. And in the end all that remained of this episode in Marthe's mind was a happy recollection. She hardly ever now left the house. The days were shortening, the lamp was lit sooner and insensibly winter had come.

The long pleasant evenings around the stove recommenced, they read aloud once more, and above all the piano was re-opened. . . . What Marthe found so charming in Otto's character was his capacity for sentimental and spiritual joys, limitless as a dream. There were two men in him, and in that how typical he was of his race! On the one hand he was a dreamer, a great listener to music and a great maker of theories; on the other hand, a practical man of action. . . . She was ever astonished that it was the same man,— he whom she saw, in the details of his work, so precise, so sedulous, so fastidious, and he whom she watched with the tail of her eye when, seated in front of the key-

board, where a piece of music by Mendelssohn or a score by Wagner lay open, she let her fingers flit, carried away by the vertiginous rhythm, over the living keys. . . . How deeply she realised at those moments the profound genius of Germany! What other nation had drawn from the human lyre accents more divine? This was the true land of that balm and philtre,— sweet, powerful and intoxicating music. Were not Beethoven and Mozart the greatest evokers of the infinite? . . . And with what a force she felt herself drawn towards Otto when she perceived him at the corner of the piano, with his head bent under the lamp and his eyes closed, listening to the natal soul and universal hymn which was singing within him. They flowed from her as from a spring. That was a minute of supreme fusion, of immaterial flight in the open heavens. The same pinions carried them both aloft.

Never, since they spent their evenings in this charming manner,— never, not even during the first days of their marriage, had they felt themselves closer friends. That winter, during the intimacy of those hours when they had no need to speak to make themselves understood, their communion was so absolute and so strong that Marthe, ordinarily rather reticent, felt a need to unfold her heart. She caught herself singing whilst occupied with domestic work. She tormented Frida with affectionate jokes. She wrote long and amusing letters to Amiens,— letters which reflected her happiness on every page. . . .

The months of December and January, with their fog and snow, passed unperceived; so did February's feeble sun and April's snows. . . .

Spring came; and although it was the second one she had spent at Marburg, it promised so well that it seemed to her that she felt it born, in her heart, for the first time. Easter brought its traditional fête, its bells and coloured eggs, and, in glasses of engraved crystal, pale golden Rhenish wines. Herr Rudheimer had again proposed the toast in which he discreetly expressed every one's hope. They had listened to it with a somewhat mischievous attention, a tender complicity, Marthe's health having, for some days past, sounded the alarm. One morning, three weeks later, Marthe, on rising, with pale and altered features, put her hand to her side.

"Otto! Otto!" she cried.

She stretched her arms towards him, smiling, with tearful eyes. He stopped short in the making of his toilet, astonished and hesitative.

"Is it true?" he murmured.

"Yes, listen."

She took his hand and laid it on her fine chemise. But piously he knelt down and placed his attentive ear on the warm garment.

"Yes," he said, "yes, you are right."

Simultaneously pride carried their souls aloft. And at the same time their hearts were filled with a feeling so delicious, so new that, fearing to burst into tears, they refrained from speaking.

"My dear wife," stammered Otto.

He pressed her charming body against his powerful chest, as though it were a sacred treasure. One of his arms supported the already enlarged waist, the other the enraptured and bending head. A tear of joy welled forth in one of Marthe's eyes, wetting the eye-lashes and flowing on the nacreous eye-lid. Then, without speaking, he kissed the clouded eyes one after the other. They fluttered under his lips. They were soft, warm and living; through them he kissed the soul of the beloved being who was his. . . . To think that soon they would be three!

Henceforth they took no heed of the flight of time. April, May and June formed but a brief enchantment. Constantly filled with the one thought, hours seemed but minutes to them. Marthe was much occupied with the cutting out, sewing and washing of a large supply of baby-linen. The entire household revolved around the coming morsel of humanity, to whom everybody and everything were in advance subservient. The pastor, looking younger in his long black frock-coat, appeared invariably with a jovial countenance, and Frau Rudheimer discovered, at the bottom of her drawers, a whole stock of lace and rattles. They had been used by Otto, after having been used by his father. . . . They would still come in for the son of the son of Otto!

On the eve of the day on which Marthe was to set out for Amiens (for it was already the end of

June and the Ellangés expressed a strong desire to see their daughter whilst she was still in a state of health to travel without danger), Frau Rudheimer, assisted by the chamber-maid and the pastor, who handed her the dresses, carefully packed her daughter-in-law's trunks. She insisted on Marthe's avoiding any bending down and on husbanding her strength. . . . Otto had decided, although his holidays did not begin until the end of July, to accompany his wife. Without missing his lectures, absence from Friday to Monday was sufficient to enable him to go as far as Amiens and back. . . . By doing this he felt he would be easier in his mind, notwithstanding the presence of Frida Lehmann, who was also to make the journey. . . . It was the last time that Frida would see France, so she had decided to take advantage of the opportunity of travelling with her friend. . . . At last the hour for departure came. Marthe, with hat on head and bag in hand, came out from her room. Frau Rudheimer retained her.

"Look, Marthe," she said.

She pointed to the trim nuptial bed with its white cotton curtains on which, that very morning, her clumsy old hands had taken pains to knot a fine piece of new green silk ribbon,— the colour of hope.

"Look, my dear daughter! When you return, little Hermann has but to make his appearance. . . . The bed is ready! It awaits you!"

PART II

IV

THROUGH the lofty open windows, looking on to the Boulevard du Mail, the magnificence of evening entered, and at the same time the confused noise of holiday-making Amiens, the distant music of the Fair of St. John. It was not yet night with its coolness, but that indefinite hour when the day is drawing out and when, nevertheless, the stars are already twinkling. By slow degrees, the sky was changing in colour,— would soon become dark, and without the heat having subsided. There was not a breath of air in the heavy and already black mass of the trees. At the ends of the table, covered with silver, the flames of the candles burnt immobile and straight.

No one spoke. And yet, in that festive dining-room, there reigned an atmosphere of profound tenderness, the result of hearts having been drawn closer together. Amidst that silence they could hear each other. . . . M. and Mme. Ellangé's tender eyes were bent on Marthe. She had indeed changed. . . . Yet in the fuller, graver face the features of former days were apparent to them. The mischievousness in her eyes recalled that youth which, not so very long ago, had turned everything

topsy-turvy there. Jacques and Louis, on either side of their sister, took a delight — after chattering the whole day — in their inexhaustible confidences, experienced an intense joy in at last having her back amongst them and in finding that she was almost the same as before. At first, on her arrival with Otto, there had been between all of them, and in spite of embraces, a sort of inevitable embarrassment and coldness. She quite expected it. Was not her husband, in the eyes of every one of her family, doubly a stranger? They hardly knew him. . . . And badly, moreover, owing to their prejudices. . . . She counted on his second visit, when he came to fetch her in August. Then, thanks to his kindness, his good humour and his science, he would conquer the whole family, which was secretly jealous,— he would definitely make himself accepted, and soon would make himself loved. . . . In her own case she felt the necessity of letting a few hours pass by, in order to resume her former habits and discover herself anew. . . . An unforeseen incident had, as far as she was concerned, precipitated the fusion. Otto, suffering from a violent attack of neuralgia, had had to go to bed on arriving and stop there the next day. . . . Whilst he was resting, she had had to give up long hours successively to the curiosity and affection of every one.

"It is my turn now, Marthe," said Mme. Ellangé, when the Procurator and her sons had monopolised her longer than the normal time.

The Major, who, seated on the right of his daughter-in-law, drew vigorously at his pipe — an undeniable sign of emotion — took in at a glance the family table, and then, having blown a big cloud of smoke, made the declaration: —

"There's nothing like mutual support, all the same! . . . Do you know, little one, we thought you were lost. But here you are again, and that's the important point."

These words caused her less suffering than what was left unsaid. The very justice of the reproach made her find it more unjust. . . . Yes, she had written but little and thought still less, she had been lacking in tenderness and confidence towards them. . . . And yet, having obeyed the strongest law, that of her womanly instinct, she felt no shame. Did not her duties as a wife come before those of a daughter and a sister? . . . She suffered also, in spite of her joy at being there, because, owing to Otto's absence, their tenderness was divided. And who could say whether her husband's absence did not, perhaps, contribute to the satisfaction of her people?

"I hope," said the ever-good Mme. Ellangé, "that Otto will write to-morrow to Marburg to get his holiday extended,— at any rate long enough to give him time to recover. What a pity that his lectures are not yet over!"

"He would have done very much better to let you come alone, with Frida," observed Jacques.

"In that way he would have avoided the fatigue of the journey."

The kindness of the thought was tinged with irony: the disdain of a soldier, proud of his health and strength. And then, think of a doctor being ill! There was something comical in the idea. . . . He rose, well proportioned in his uniform. Marthe could not help smiling at him. It was evident that his military coat suited him better than it did Otto.

"And how is Mlle. Lehmann?" enquired Louis.

More of an artist and more cultivated than his brother, the advocate had always been sympathetically disposed towards his sister's former governess. He teased her, but, because of her credulity and awkwardness, held her in affection.

"Her also we shall see again with pleasure."

The discreet Frida, under the pretext that she had purchases and visits to make, had left her companion on reaching Paris, and was to come on to Amiens later.

The Major, in Marthe's honour, then held out his liqueur glass towards Mme. Ellangé, who made a pretence of fastening the cover of the liqueur-stand in front of her with the ancient key hanging by a chain from her neck.

"Give me a drop of kirsch! We've drunk to papa and mamma; now we must toast a little fellow of whom, it seems to me, we've said very little up to now."

"Grandfather is right," said M. Ellangé. "I also will take a little kirsch."

"And what about us?" exclaimed the two brothers, simultaneously.

Gaily they called for brandy, whilst Marthe consented to take a little more *cacao*.

"There! Only a drop or two. Thank you!"

"It's Veuve Amphoux's make, you know," said Mme. Ellangé, carefully raising the square bottle. "*Ma foi,* I think I'll take a little more myself."

"To my great grandson!" proposed the Major. "To Jean Pierre Rudheimer. I warrant the jolly little fellow will be a drinker of kirsch."

Marthe's memory carried her back to another meal; she once more heard the words of another toast. The kindly faces of the pastor and his wife appeared before her, amidst the intimacy of the little dining-room in Marburg. Her family was there also. Her heart — troubled — went from one to the other. But at that minute a stronger bond attached her to those of her own flesh and blood. She rose and went to embrace her mother. Whilst the two women were talking together in a low voice, the men, having emptied their glasses at a draught, resumed the discussion which had been interrupted by the dinner. Jacques spoke of the bad effect which had been produced on the officers of the 43rd regiment by the speech which Jules Favre had delivered on June 30 before the Corps législatif on the

subject of the Bill calling 90,000 men of class 70 under the flags. It had just been reproduced by the *Mémorial d'Amiens.* Louis took the current issue, that for Sunday, July 3, from a small round table, and unfolded it with a wry face. A Republican, as much by conviction as through the natural tendency of youth to belong to the opposition and combat accepted ideas, he read, preferably, the *Progrès de la Somme.*

"Let us have a look at it!"

"Thiers, at any rate, apologises," said the lieutenant. "He's not like your red republicans. He confesses that Marshal Niel was right, the day after Sadowa, in wanting to increase our forces. He recognises that our strength lies in peace. Instead of being, as formerly, face to face with a federal Germany powerless to attack, we are in the presence of a formidable military power. I cannot see, any more than your Jules Favre can, what interest Prussia could have in throwing herself upon us with the forty million men which she represents since her offensive treaties with the Southern States. . . . But between that and bellowing about disarmament, as these gentlemen of the opposition do,— between that and refusing to vote for the total of the contingent there is a vast difference. . . . Isn't that so, father? . . . It's all very well for you to shake your head, little brother. You defend Favre because you're a lawyer. But cast your eyes to the ground and remember the fable. It was through such non-

sense as yours that the astrologer woke up to find himself at the bottom of the well."

"Impenitent Orleanist though he is, M. Thiers, in my opinion, is here in the right," said the Procurator. "Only the strong are respected. Consequently I am easy in my mind. However greedy M. de Bismarck's policy may be, he will hesitate before he attacks so large a morsel as France. *Faucibus hæsit!*"

The Major lit a fresh pipe.

"Not bad, making a mouthful of Austria," murmured the old man. "But that was a foregone conclusion. Vienna! Pooh! We've promenaded more than once on the Prater. But Blücher in the Champs-Élysées, that's another thing. That's not seen twice in a century. And then several of them joined together for the Invasion. It is true one of them was a King of Prussia. Plus two emperors. The Holy Alliance!"

"I should not like," continued the lieutenant, "to pain Marthe by insisting on a subject the very idea of which must upset her. But she will be the first to remind you, grandfather, that there can be a Holy Alliance more redoubtable than that of sovereigns,— namely, that of peoples of the same race, armed for the same fight. . . . Our sister has just lived two years in Germany and is well acquainted with the trend of thought there."

He became silent. Every one turned towards Marthe and waited for her to speak. But, as

though overcome by stupor, she watched, in silence, the terrible spectre rise before her mental eye. Thus, hardly had she arrived, with her heart full of sweet thoughts, entirely given up to remembrances and hope, than she came into contact with this nightmare. . . . It was taking shape,— every one looked upon it as a possible, even probable reality, an event of which the date alone was unknown. Thus, the monstrosity of which her father had formerly so rudely warned her, and the image of which, up to then, she had almost always succeeded in forcibly repelling, in order to preserve her happiness, rose up once more and imposed itself upon her!

She had only had to leave the nest where she had taken shelter, with her head hidden in her love and desirous of neither hearing nor seeing,— she had only had to place her foot upon the soil where she had spent her childhood and to re-enter the home of her youth, to feel both soil and home tremble.

Jacques attested:

"Is it not true, Marthe, that on the other side of the Rhine there is but a single country,— Germany, whatsoever may be the name, Prussia, Bavaria or Saxony, by which they divide it, and that all Germans are ready to shed their blood for unity?"

"Yes," she murmured. "*Für Deutschland's Vertheidigung!*"

The words rang out mysteriously prophetic.

"For the unity of the German fatherland! . . . Yes, that's it. Do you hear, grandfather?"

"Yes, I hear," replied the Major. "Now, listen yourself. . . ."

The gap-toothed old soldier began to whistle an ancient martial air. It was to the sound of that music that they had entered Berlin and Vienna. His eyes laughed, satirically.

Louis sighed and said:

"A great idea is a great force."

But M. Ellangé brought the discussion to a close by saying:

"There is something still stronger than a great idea,— namely, a great force at the service of a great idea. I, like you, wish for peace, because there is no finer idea, and because, at the bottom, in spite of so many wars which have stood in the way, the Empire symbolises Peace. But I add, with M. Thiers, peace is strength. Now, we possess strength. Therefore . . ."

Satisfied with his syllogism, he disdained to complete his argument, and made the proposal:

"Suppose we go upstairs and sit with Otto a little, unless there is a danger of fatiguing him too much?"

But Jacques had an unavoidable meeting to attend, a *punch d'adieu* in honour of a comrade who was changing his employment. Decidedly he had no sympathy either for the person or the ideas of that big red-haired man his brother-in-law.

"I'll go with you," said the Major.

He was still, at eighty-one years of age, a faithful *habitué* of the Military Club. His senile egoism, momentarily overcome by the pleasure of once more seeing Marthe, had again got the upper hand. His life was as regular as a clock,— turned in a circle of little invariable occupations. Marthe gracefully kissed his aged skin, as rough as a stone. A long hand-shake united her to Jacques.

"Good night to Otto!" he exclaimed.

She evoked these two men, her brother and her husband, face to face, in their rival uniforms. . . . Come now! What folly it was! . . . When nothing was threatening . . . and when so many subjects of conversation. . . .

That evening, after M. and Mme. Ellangé, with Louis, had retired, and the Major having returned home about midnight all noise in the house had ceased, Marthe, undressed, remained long at the window.

Otto's irregular breathing, his dear presence filled the room behind her. The warm air mingled with the perfume of the night, and at the same time there entered with it a great and silent peace, the beauty of the slumbering town, the fields where the thick-sown crops were springing up, the freshness of gardens, the whole familiar scenery of her native district. . . . How many, many hours, during the sleepless nights of summer, she had thus, in her girlhood, spent in dreaming! Her old thoughts,

without any effort on her part, came back to her,—everything which had been her first self from the time when she wore medium-length skirts and her hair in a plait. That was before Frida had entered into her life. . . . She went to Mlle. Lavergne's *pension* in the Rue des Corps-Nuds-Sans-Têtes. She recited La Fontaine and the catechism. Her brothers were models of humanity. . . . She did not believe that one could become anything else than a magistrate or an officer. M. Ellangé, then advocate general, and the Major, the hero of the Napoleonic epoch, formed the limit of her social horizon, exactly in the same way as Amiens was her whole world. Her mother, with her devotion and subdued grace, incarnated the whole rôle and mission of woman. . . . Then Fräulein Lehmann had come with other ideas — and discoveries. Frontiers and fetters were abolished. There was the joy of seeing, loving, understanding everything; the desire to form herself according to her dream, and to marry the man of her choice.

She bent over her sleeping husband. He breathed with difficulty, oppressed by a bad dream, which he mechanically thrust from him with his hand. So as not to disturb him, she took up as little space as possible in stretching herself out in the large bed. How good it was, she thought, to sleep once more on a thick, supple mattress! To-morrow, at break of day, she would get up for early mass at the cathedral. She had been filled with

emotion on once more seeing its huge mass rising from the little square,— that accumulation of doors, gables, galleries and towers which impressed the onlooker as much by the simplicity of its mystic grandeur as by its fabulous flower-like architecture. But, absorbed by the presence and the prayers of the whole town, she had been unable to commune with herself. Alone, in the deserted apsis, she would pray with the officiating priest. . . . She would ask God to allow her happiness to continue — to allow nothing to trouble her quietude. . . . She tried in vain to sleep and, turning nervously from side to side, thought of the new life which struggled within her and proved its strength by tormenting her with dull blows.

Otto, after dragging on until Wednesday with a slight fever, began to look better and left his room. A telegram from Marburg had relieved him of all anxiety; the Rector expressed a desire that he should get quite well again and only return when he felt inclined. But, prompted by the thought of his duty, he was already talking of leaving at the end of the week. It would be but a going and coming. . . . Early in August he would be back again. What a good time they would have on the banks of the Hallue, in the garden of Pont-Noyelles! He had retained a delightful recollection of the old house (a family property of the Ellangés, where they had sojourned during the month of their engagement), and of the orchard, with its low

plum-trees, whose heavy branches trailed on the grass.

"Do you remember, after the Exhibition?"

Once more their lips closed over the juicy fruit and its odorous flavour mingled with the furtive taste of their kisses.

Fräulein Lehmann, who had prolonged her shopping in Paris, arrived on Thursday morning. Otto and Marthe went to meet her at the railway station. Strange pieces of news had circulated since the previous evening. There was a rumour of the candidature of a Prussian prince for the Spanish throne. Marshal Prim had offered it to him, and the acceptance of Leopold von Hohenzollern was only suspended, it was said, until the consent of the head of the house, King William, had been obtained.

At dinner, the day before, M. Ellangé and Otto had discussed the dangers of the eventuality. Where the doctor saw but a flattering offer for his country, without any possible effect on general politics, the Procurator, with his profound knowledge of historical laws, detected the possibility of a sudden conflict. What! a German proconsul on the other side of the Pyrenees? . . . Travellers, arriving from Paris in the evening, had even retailed the terms of an energetic declaration which Duke de Gramont had read at the tribune. . . . Rather than support a German prince on the throne of Charles V, rather than see the equilibrium of Europe disturbed, and the interests and honour of

France imperilled, "we shall know, gentlemen, how to carry out our duty without either hesitation or weakness. . . ." Whereupon Louis could not resist crying: —

"But what about the fine hope of the plebiscitum, father? The country thirsting for work and peace? For the masses, you know, only voted in remembrance of the old song, 'The Empire stands for Peace?' It seems to me that the Empire is more and more the symbol of war."

"And what will happen then?" the Major had interjected.

And what will happen then? Marthe could still hear these words, which had chilled her to the heart, as she read in the *Mémorial,* on the station platform, the terms of the warlike speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Otto, gloomy, folded up the newspaper. If the prince's candidature was confirmed, then, considering France's bellicose attitude and Prussia's distrustful ambition, the fat was in the fire. What was going to happen? . . . The train whistled in the distance, its smoke appeared and soon the heavy waggons thundered over the turntables. Frida Lehmann's ruddy face, enframed with white curls, was visible at one of the carriage-doors.

She arrived full of the fever which was agitating Paris. From time to time she held her forehead between her hands, busily counted her innumerable packages. "Have I forgotten anything? Yes!

. . . Ah! *mon Dieu,* there's my handbag on the seat! . . . And my ticket? Where has my ticket gone to? . . . Have you got my hat-box, dear Marthe? *Mein Gott!* my poor Otto, what terrible news this is!" She resembled a noisy child who had been left to its own resources. Her dress and accent made people turn their heads. There was whispering around them and already threatening looks were given in their direction. Otto's appearance and the few words which had been exchanged in German drew hostility upon them. Already the fire was smouldering,— the idea of war was spreading from one to the other.

The days passed amidst a feeling of great uneasiness and an ever-increasing anxiety. Everybody tried at table to avoid the subject which haunted them. Marthe, terror-stricken and as white as a sheet, feigned to be in good spirits, but her febrile gaiety rang false, and they fell back again into deep and intolerable silences, during which thoughts were so prolific that very soon the words came out by themselves,— commonplace phrases, with which each tried to beguile his or her torment, but which deceived no one. Jacques and the Major were the only ones who retained smiling faces. The old man had seen many another similar occasion. As to the lieutenant, when he returned home from the barracks in an excited state of mind, he thought, egotistically, of nothing save adventure, his career and glory. His confidence hid the re-

verse of the medal from him. . . . Otto, not knowing what to decide, was inclined to return home at once. Who could tell what might happen? But, reluctant to leave his wife behind him under these conditions, he hesitated and put off deciding from hour to hour. He contained himself with difficulty and could not imagine himself returning to Marburg without Marthe. Her place, in time of war, was at home, near the old people. It was the wife's duty to guard the husband's house. . . . To think, however, of taking her back because of mere rumours, distorted and doubtless amplified,— to think of uselessly shortening her holidays, that sojourn on which she had so much counted! . . . He kept his reflections to himself. Yet he did not for a moment doubt that, spontaneously, she would carry out her duty. . . . But what was the good of paining her in advance? By speaking of one's ills, one gave them form and irritated them.

Once people took breath. Prince Hohenzollern renounced his candidature and the King of Prussia approved. Faces brightened up everywhere; eyes shone with hope. Marthe caught herself singing an ancient popular air, the recollection of which she had lost, and which suddenly sprang forth from a compartment of her mind. . . . M. Ellangé repeated, whilst rubbing his hands together, a phrase of the Emperor, and which had been repeated to him by the Prefect.

" His Majesty, on hearing that the Spanish Am-

bassador had just brought the good news to Duke de Gramont, declared: 'War would now be wholly unnecessary, an absurdity.'"

In the evening they opened a bottle of champagne and gaily touched glasses. Fräulein Lehmann, seated next to Louis, could not restrain her tears when, in silence, the glasses were raised. A crushing weight was removed from every one's heart. They looked upon the future with relief. It seemed as though Otto had again become one of the family. Unconsciously, the Ellangés fêted him, as though they wished to efface the bad impression of the last few days, and as though, in spite of themselves and in spite of him, Otto had virtually become, since this probability of war, the Enemy.

But the respite was a short one. Dark clouds suddenly re-appeared on the horizon. It was whispered that the empress' party was in favour of war; that Duke de Gramont had asked Baron von Werther, the Prussian Chargé d'Affaires, for a written promise from the king, an engagement preventing any future candidature on the part of a prince of his house; and that Benedetti, the French Ambassador, had received an order to demand, at Ems, a guarantee. . . . Once more Marthe saw her existence suspended, the scourge unchained, everything lost. They lived in an intolerable atmosphere of disguised hostility, but so apparent that Fräulein Lehmann, herself, out of the world though she was, felt it.

"I shall leave to-morrow," she said to Marthe. "Believe me, my dear, it is time to return to our own country."

She had spoken these words in the simplicity of her heart, but, measuring their import by Marthe's commotion, she corrected herself, and stammered:

"I beg your pardon! I forgot that you are a German of recent date, and that you will leave part of your heart here."

Marthe bowed her head in silence. Up to now she had only suffered, without trying to see clearly into her heart. There was a question — a terrible one — which she had never asked herself. If war were declared to-morrow, if Otto were called out, she would have to follow him. . . . Henceforth her place was over there in the new country. . . . She did not discuss this necessity. It was a command of the law and her own heart. . . . And yet, at the idea of being alone, with the aged Rudheimers, in the little house in the Burgerstrasse,— at the idea of feeling isolated, far from Otto and far from Amiens, she felt her heart torn in two. . . . Whilst her husband was following the army, attending to the wounded, she would be feverishly waiting for news. . . . Where would the battles be fought? Secretly she hoped that it was not on French soil, in order that a patriotic sorrow might not be added to her sorrow as a wife.

In vain did the Major try to reassure her. He argued that the campaign would quickly be over.

"Your husband has nothing to fear, little one. He is not a real combatant. . . . And as to the result, you may set your mind at rest about that. This quarrel will be settled in a trice. . . . A military promenade! . . . The time to return them their Sadowa!"

But, wiping her eyes, she shook her head.

Whilst she was assisting Frida to pack her trunk, Otto, having hesitatingly knocked at the door, entered. In his hand was a telegram. It was from his father. . . . Without a word, he handed it to his wife. Trembling, she took it and read: —

"Advise immediate return, every one here preparing."

"What do you think of it?" questioned Otto, at the end of a moment.

She sought his eyes and looked into them frankly. Otto gazed at her sadly, but with entire confidence. However great might be the sacrifice — whatever she was going to leave behind her — her mind was made up immediately; she would show herself worthy of so much esteem and affection.

"I am ready to follow you," she said.

He took her by the hands and drew her to his breast.

"These are cruel hours, dear Marthe. But we shall know how to support them courageously."

He raised his soul towards God. He felt no hatred against any one, only a little pain at being treated by the Ellangés, his parents, as though he

were a burdensome guest, an intruder whose departure they both welcomed and feared, since on leaving he would be taking Marthe with him. . . . Notwithstanding the secret anger which he saw increasing around him,— an anger against everything which bore a German name, he felt no rancour whatsoever against chattering, frivolous France. No longer ago than yesterday, war — a distant phantom — struck terror to his heart, as it did in the case of every intelligent man; but to-day when it rose up — tangible and ineluctable — a profound sense of discipline and above all a vision of the great entity taking shape replaced his individual thought. The image of the German fatherland, the unbounded collective dream about to become a reality, Germany on her feet, united and victorious, that effaced, dominated, justified everything.

It was the morning of the 15th, trunks had been fastened and the departure fixed for three o'clock in the afternoon. In the dining-room M. and Mme. Ellangé were exchanging desultory remarks with Otto and Marthe. Since the evening before events were rapidly following one on the other. A despatch from Bismarck to the various embassies had cut off the bridges. "Henceforth, the King of Prussia," it announced, "refuses to receive the French Ambassador." During the past few days the Ambassador had paid him several fruitless visits. William definitely avoided France's insulting and unreasonable demand. This time war

was inevitable. "*Alea jacta est,*" M. Ellangé had solemnly declared.

All were red-eyed and fuller of emotion than they showed. Louis was nervously walking backwards and forwards, whilst the Major, seated at a little table in front of the open window, was carefully cleaning and blowing into his pipe. After passing a thin brass wire down the cherry-wood stem, he inflated his cheeks and blew with all his strength. In the old man's eyes, nothing else existed in the whole world.

"Mlle. Lehmann is a long time in coming back," said the Procurator at last. "Suppose we sit down to table?"

She had gone out about eleven o'clock to pay a final visit to the cathedral and museum.

"And what about Jacques?" added Marthe.

"He told us not to count upon him. He is so occupied just now."

Every one thought of the barracks, humming like a hive. For although the mobilisation had not yet been decreed, all were hard at work. What with distributions and reviews Jacques could not find a moment to spare. . . . The picture they had evoked was so painful a one that Louis, in order to divert their thoughts, began to joke about the absent Frida and her legendary absence of mind.

"To table!" decided Marthe. "Are you coming, grandfather?"

"All right! All right!"

The Major, having tested his pipe by a few more inhalations, was briskly rising to his feet when a confused noise rose from the Boulevard du Mail.

"What's that?" exclaimed Louis.

And leaning against the window-rail, by the side of his grandfather, both looked down into the street.

"Oh!"

"The devil!"

On hearing this double cry every one suddenly rose and chairs were overturned. Mme. Ellangé, alarmed, moaned. *"Ah! mon Dieu!"* She had become excessively nervous since recent events and was getting more so. On the other hand, M. Ellangé retained, even in his most vivacious movements, an affected coldness, a professional majesty.

"Another alleged spy," he declared, "or else a bearer of false news."

The street was in a perpetual state of agitation. Shouts arose from all sides. Here and there the people collected into groups; then broke up again. "A Berlin! . . . Vive la France! . . . *Allons! enfants de la Patrie!"* came from the crowd, which, this time, was not an ordinary one. It was difficult to see through the trees what was happening in the midst of the howling group which about a hundred onlookers were accompanying. But the cries of anger and the threats could be heard distinctly. "Death to the Prussian! She's a spy! Hang her!"

Marthe was the first to recognise, from her straw-

bonnet ornamented with cherries, that it was Frida. Clenched fists were stretched towards her and sought to strike her on the face. She was walking, as white as a sheet,— she who usually was so ruddy,— between two policemen, who had the greatest difficulty in defending her. Her large tender eyes, very wide open through fear, gazed wildly upon the enraged mob. Otto, his fists clenched with indignation and his lips white, looked upon the scene in silence.

"Frida!" cried Marthe. "Oh! what an outrage! Father, you would not tolerate such an abomination as this!"

M. Ellangé, filled with indignation, threw down the napkin which he was still holding and rushed to the assistance of the excellent woman. The Major and Louis followed him.

"The wretches!" cried the advocate. "If they had their own way they would dishonour France."

"Remain here, grandfather," pleaded Marthe.

But the Major had already crossed the threshold. Soon Marthe saw him out on the boulevard, endeavouring to overtake the Procurator and Louis, who were running towards the gesticulating procession. It was but some sixty yards away, and M. Ellangé was about to reach it, in company with Louis, when Marthe uttered a piercing scream. Frida had collapsed in the arms of the policemen. "She's shamming! She's dead! String her up to a lamp-post! Finish her off!"

The tumult suddenly increased, then immediately subsided. The groups made way. The Procurator had been recognised. . . . The people waited, with a curiosity still stormy, but which quickly changed to stupor and confusion. . . . The names, presence and guarantee of the three Ellangés, beloved and known, from grandfather to grandson, acted on the crowd, so prompt to change its mind. But still more was the mob impressed by the sight of poor Frida's big body bent in two. The policemen had a difficulty in supporting her, with her head hanging forward, so that the cherries on her hat swept the ground, and her arms swinging. Louis helped to raise her up and they laid her gently down. M. Ellangé put his ear to her heart, tried to detect respiration, and then rose, deadly pale.

"It is all over! She is dead!" he said.

Then the people moved aside and took off their hats.

Otto and Marthe, clinging to the window, understood. . . . They spoke not a word; their hearts were bursting. Yet they could not believe the truth. Mme. Ellangé wrung her hands. Preceded by the Procurator and the Major, the funereal group came towards them. One of the policemen held the feet; Louis and the other officer were at the head.

Hastily descending, the two women received on the threshold of the vestibule all that remained of Frida Lehmann. The dead woman was placed upon a sofa in the drawing-room, awaiting the prep-

aration of the death-bed. In vain did Otto try tractions of the tongue and a sub-cutaneous injection. . . . Rising to his feet, he pointed through the window at the magnificent sky, and said: —

"She is there!"

And as Mme. Ellangé, sobbing, asked "if it were possible?" he added: —

"Emotion, terror. . . . Doubtless an embolism!"

Hours passed, occupied with the details of the last toilette.

"But what about your departure, my children?" asked Mme. Ellangé, as five o'clock struck.

Otto glanced at the motionless body. What decision was he to come to? Should he take the dead woman back to Marburg? But the length of the formalities, the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility of transporting the body, if the situation became complicated ever so little, was to be thought about. . . . Should he have her buried at Amiens? . . . Yes, that would be better. He would have liked, however, to have remained a few days longer with his wife to pay their last respects to their old friend. . . . But more imperious duties called him away. Mme. Ellangé guessed his scruples and entreated him:

"At any rate, if you cannot prolong your own stay, leave Marthe with me. She will rejoin you as soon as possible."

Otto was stunned by the brutality of events and

the way they had followed one on the other. He considered whether he had not better defer his return until after the sad ceremony rather than leave Marthe behind. . . . Perhaps, after all, a gleam of reason might hold back the two nations, on the edge of the precipice? Was a collision absolutely inevitable? He was beginning to hope that it might be avoided when, at the close of the afternoon, Louis came in with M. Ellangé. They arrived from the Palais, where the First President had informed them that the die was cast. That very afternoon, at the Senate and in the Chamber, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Keeper of the Seals had read the declaration of the Government, and had been cheered. Thiers, demanding that at least they should take time to reflect, Jules Favre and E. Arago, asking that the text of the despatches be made known, had been silenced, covered with hoots and insults.

"Nevertheless," observed Louis, "we won our case in the main. As Thiers had the courage to say, torrents of blood are going to be spilt for a question of form."

He became silent. For at that moment the Major came in, singing, "*Veillons au salut de l'Empire!*" He was in a sprightly mood through having drunk two glasses of Vermuth to the health of His Majesty and the success of his arms.

They sat down to table, but without Jacques. He had sent word that he was dining at the Club,

where the enthusiasm was great. The Major's high spirits quickly subsided. They ate amidst an icy silence. The weight of the unknown no less than that of death oppressed them. The terror of the morrow was added to the sorrow of the present. When the dishes had been despatched, and as they were folding up their napkins, without paying any further heed to the grandfather, who had only just reached the roast and was continuing to masticate his food with methodical slowness, a telegram was brought in.

"For M. Rudheimer," announced the *femme de chambre* in a low voice.

"Will you allow me?"

He broke open the envelope. All eyes were fixed upon him. It seemed an eternity before he spoke. Twice he read the message, then he folded it up and, placing his heavy hand upon it, said, at last: —

"My father informs me that I have received my mobilisation order. I must set off at once."

He rose. With the exception of the Major, who was drawing towards him the dish of peaches, everybody followed suit. Large tears flowed down Mme. Ellangé's cheeks. The Procurator coughed, whilst Louis, approaching Marthe, put his arms around her neck.

"And you, little sister,— what will you do?"

"I shall follow Otto."

Releasing herself from her brother's arms, she came and placed herself, quite simply by her hus-

band's side. Face to face and with downcast eyes, the two groups stood motionless. Only the regular noise of mastication could be heard. The Major, having carefully pealed his peach, was busily eating it. . . . The painful silence seemed interminable. At last Otto spoke.

"Thank you, dear wife. But I shall set out alone. . . . Remain with your mother, so as to assist her. As soon as Frida Lehmann rests in the bosom of the Eternal you can follow me. . . . Perhaps I shall still be at Marburg when you arrive. But if not, you must await me there. For henceforth that is your place."

His final words fell like a cleaver. On hearing them each felt as though they had cut into raw flesh. . . . The Major had risen. His gaze passed, without apparent emotion, from one group to the other: the Rudheimers and the Ellangés. . . . Two nations and two races were opposed in them. They were so near that they could have touched each other, as though there was not a definite division — almost a gulf already — between them. . . . What words could have expressed what they felt? . . . To the utmost extent they realised their powerlessness, knowing that everything, now, was vain, and what a tragic fatality weighed upon them.

V

After the burial of Frida, Marthe was stricken down by an intense fever. On returning from the cemetery she had had to go to bed. She passed a burning hot night, with delirium following on torpor.

"What is the matter with her, doctor?"

Mme. Ellangé anxiously questioned good Dr. Nichamy as he was laboriously descending the staircase. Stopping on the landing and with a glance in the direction of the floor above, as though he feared he might be overheard, he declared:

"I fear erysipelas."

"A serious attack?"

"I hope not. It depends on whether she worries herself too much or not."

Mme. Ellangé shrugged her shoulders.

"What can you expect? And in her state, too?"

The good and learned Dr. Nichamy, who was physician to the Hôtel-Dieu and had been the family doctor for the past thirty years, concealed the most affectionate delicacy beneath his rough exterior. Taking Mme. Ellangé by the hands, he replied:

"My dear good lady! Marthe is young. Good health will get the upper hand. . . . How long has she been enceinte?"

Mme. Ellangé counted.

"This is the fifth month. . . . The child will be born in November."

Dr. Nichamy made a reassuring gesture.

"Oh! there's plenty of time between now and then,—time for her to get back to Marburg."

Mme. Ellangé raised her eyes to heaven. . . . What a calamity this war was! It was enough to drive any one crazy!

"Bah! It will soon be over. How are your sons? What is Jacques doing?"

"He leaves to-morrow morning with the 43rd Regiment."

"Where are they going?"

"It is said to Thionville. The 4th Army Corps, under General de Ladmirault."

"God be with them. I share your anxiety."

Dr. Nichamy moved away with his broad back stooping. He rejoiced, at that moment, over the thought that he was a childless old bachelor. . . . Everywhere, in every family, he found the same anxiety. . . . Poor people! . . . But nowhere was the tragedy more poignant than here. . . . Marthe's suffering face beset him.

In order to attend to her more conveniently, she had been placed in the bedroom which she had occupied when a girl, and which communicated with that

of Mme. Ellangé. During the intervals when the fever left her prostrated but lucid, she gazed at the walls, the pink-striped paper, the flowers on the curtains which she had so many times counted, the light-coloured brasses of the chest of drawers, and the sweet, dark face of her grandmother in its faded gold frame with astonishment. . . . Happy mischievousness shone in the eyes of this stranger. Never had anything troubled their tranquillity. Never had any suffering tormented *her* life. . . . "My destiny bears no resemblance to hers," thought Marthe. "Why should sorrow be heaped exclusively upon one? It was not just."

At times she imagined she was once more a little girl. It was then that, with head leaning back on the pillow, throbbing temples, and a feeling that she was the same person and yet another — so much another, she lived certain hours of her past life over again: an illness which she had had at sixteen and her long convalescence after an attack of typhoid. . . . Had those days really existed, had she really been that pale silhouette of which she was reminded by a faded photograph standing on the mantelpiece? . . . Was it possible that a person could change so much in appearance and in mind? . . . And then, in gusts, the fever would mount to her face; a whirlwind of red and black ideas would veil her eyes. She saw Frida staggering in the midst of a crowd of lunatics and Jacques, surrounded by smoke, brandishing a flag. She heard the crackle of musketry and the

loud thunder of cannon. . . . Then Otto rose up before her brother and plunged a sword into his breast. . . . Her husband, her brother! . . . Why, oh! why was this?

Hammer-like blows pounded her forehead, lancinating pains zigzagged through her body. . . . By a sudden effort of her will she sat up in bed. She must dress herself, take the train, leave at once. . . . At all cost, she must rejoin Otto . . . over there, where her place was.

She had just dozed off, thoroughly exhausted, when the door half-opened.

"Hush!" exclaimed Mme. Ellangé on the threshold. "She is sleeping."

"I should much have liked to have kissed her."

Marthe, in the sort of swoon in which she lay, recognised the voices as those of her mother and Jacques. . . . She opened her eyes. The lieutenant had drawn near and as he stood near the bed he enveloped her with a long, farewell look. Suddenly recovering consciousness of herself and at the same time of her ills, she read in it tenderness and pity.

"You are going?" she murmured.

"To-morrow morning at four o'clock. . . . *Au revoir,* Marthon. I'm sorry to leave you ill, and yet I'm glad you're here, at home."

She saw his meaning. But, though sufficiently conscious to suffer through it, she felt too weary to reply. She was tossed here and there like a piece of wreckage. He continued.

"I do not know when I shall see you again, now. . . ."

The double meaning of the phrase was apparent. Marburg was so far away; the unknown and bloody to-morrow held forth its traps. Towards what destiny was her brother, this courageous young man, so full of strength and life, moving? Should she ever see him again? . . . Their whole childhood rose before her. She recalled their military games at Pont-Noyelles; with him, the eldest, as general of the army, the gentle Louis as a soldier, and she as a *cantinière.* One day, Jacques had taken her to a circus and during a panic, caused by an alarm of fire, he had saved her life by holding her high in the air. On another occasion he had sprained his wrist whilst climbing the first-floor balcony, to get her a branch of jessamine. He had taught her how to row on the pond. The oars used to become entangled in the long stalks of the water-lilies, and as his face was splashed with the drops of water he laughed.

A faint smile appeared on her face and she sighed.

"Let us hope."

With that vivacity which in the case of so many sturdy men hides a deep emotion, he cut short his farewell. With all the fervour of her heart, she followed, accompanied him. . . .

She woke up early in the morning as Mme. Ellangé was crossing the room on tiptoe. Her mother was going to the station with the whole fam-

ily. Marthe was to be left in charge of the aged Julie whose fluted bonnet and wrinkled old face, resembling a rennet, timidly appeared in the doorway.

"Come in, come in, Julie," said Mme. Ellangé. "Have I forgotten anything?"

She verified the contents of her bag: a flat pocket-flask full of old rum, a thousand francs in bank-notes in a pocket-book, and a consecrated medal sewn into the lining. Marthe turned over.

"Kiss him well, mamma," she said.

Doors banged. Once more the house was buried in silence. Through the narrow opening of the curtains a pale green sky appeared. Now and then the brass-instruments of a band could be heard. . . . It was the 43rd Regiment, with Jacques at the head of his section. They were to pass the Place St. Denis. . . . Quite awake, Marthe compared her brother's departure with the almost shame-faced one of Otto. Coldly, in the evening, at the door of the death-chamber where Frida lay, surrounded by lighted candles, he had taken leave of them all. She alone had accompanied him to the railway station. They had walked up and down the platform for nearly an hour, waiting for the train. At last the cruel minute had come; weeping, they had embraced each other; and as the carriages moved off she had followed full of distress, the figure leaning out at one of the windows, the face of her husband as it was swallowed up in the night. . . . The red light at the end of the train receded in its turn, grew

smaller and disappeared. . . . Her life seemed to slip from her. . . . She had needed all her moral strength to keep up her courage. She promised herself that in three days, when her funereal duties were accomplished, she also would leave. But it would only result in a fresh separation on reaching Marburg. What sort of life would she lead without Otto in her deserted house? What sort of a welcome would the little town reserve for her with her borrowed nationality? Would she not truly be the Frenchwoman, the Enemy? . . . No matter! Duty before everything! . . . And now here she was, immobilised, perhaps for weeks. . . . Without having once more pressed him to her heart, Otto would be leaving the house where she had loved, where the little existence which was being formed within her had been conceived. How precarious was that little life,— like all lives at present in the midst of this imbecile, death-dealing hurricane! She finished by falling asleep, like a stone which drops in an abyss. Dawn had appeared, flooding the sky with a scarlet splendour.

For many days hers was an animal existence. News came to her but devoid of meaning. She heard the narrative of the triumphal departure of the 43rd Regiment. An arch, made of leafy branches and hung with Chinese lanterns, had been carried by young men in front of the drummers. All the inhabitants were at their windows, and at the corners of the streets, lined with soldiers of the

national guard, Bengal lights had been burnt. People shook hands and cheered; buoyed up their hearts with hope. . . . Marthe let herself drift along the hours like a boat on the current of a stream. Every hour of the day was disturbed by the tremendous tumult into which the nation had been thrown; rumours of early engagements and the chaos which reigned as regards the victualling of the troops, the *matériel,* etc. Societies for the succour of the wounded were formed. Subscriptions poured in. Louis, who could have got himself replaced, was on duty at the citadel and had applied for the rank of corporal in the artillery of the garde mobile. An excellent sportsman, he had obtained from his grandfather certain notions of and a taste for ballistics, and for some time had belonged to the Amiens Shooting Club. From time to time he put in an appearance at home, looking very elegant in his guardman's uniform: the cloak repaired, the blue trousers with a double red band falling well.

Marthe, with her head wrapped in cotton-wool, took her illness patiently. She lived beyond the present hour, had become once more the feeble child whom the mother coaxes. A week passed in this manner. Although the armies had not yet come to close quarters, she began to be anxious at not having received a letter from Otto, who had been informed telegraphically of her illness and the impossibility of moving for a long time. . . . At last a letter came from him. He expressed his sorrow

at hearing she was ill, far from home. She must look after herself well and quickly get better, in order to return to Marburg as soon as possible. He would not feel easy until he knew she was in port. . . . As regards himself, there were few details. The troops of Hesse, Nassau, Thuringe formed a corps in the army of the Prince Royal of Prussia. He was attached to the *lazareth* of an infantry division. He was in good health, and promised to write whenever he was able.

At the beginning of August, Marthe, the swelling of whose face had gone down and whose fever had subsided, wished to get up. She was in a hurry to enter on the convalescent stage; the thought of her return was ever with her. But she was so weak that she could hardly stagger as far as her long chair. In proportion as the time of that sudden commotion — Frida falling under extended fists and cries of death — became more remote, she felt her sadness and disgust increase. She became profoundly neurasthenic. . . . So it was to this level, that of brutes, that French people had fallen! Irascibility, credulity, savagery,— these were now the characteristics of this infant-like nation, incapable of controlling its nerves and directing its thought! The severity with which she judged was not that of a Frenchwoman but of a German, influenced in her criticism by germanic *parti pris,* under whose power she had unconsciously come. The true virtues of the race, gay, chivalrous, generous, easily

angered but not less quick to take pity, were hidden from her. Through her thick crape everything was black.

With the beginning of August came the torpidity of its hot days. Irritating flies buzzed and bit. With a tired moist hand, Marthe drove them away. The hours dragged on behind her closed shutters,—hours of suspense waiting for the arrival of the newspapers. There were no more letters, except uninteresting ones. Feverishly the seals and the writing were scrutinised. . . . And then, like a dead leaf, the letter was allowed to fall. . . . People thought of nothing else than the war, the gigantic chaos of these hundreds of thousands of men collecting on the frontiers, and amongst this ant-hill like confusion so many dear ones. . . . Otto! Jacques! . . . Daily life had ceased to be. M. Ellangé regarded his work at the Palace of Justice as the veriest drudgery. Were there still any lawsuits? How could people quarrel over their petty affairs? What disputes were worthy of being examined when such a contest as this brought two great nations face to face, when one question alone was of significance, — the present, the future, the life of France?

Louis, entirely taken up by his new occupation was full of enthusiasm. The woollen galloons indicating his rank of corporal formed a striking contrast with the dark cloth of his sleeves. They saw little of him, and Marthe regretted his absence. However short his visits might be, they brought her

appeasement, such was the delicacy which, in his endeavour to avoid recalling anything that might hurt her feelings, he showed in the slightest phrase.

But everything, in spite of the consideration shown by members of her family, wounded her. There was her father's tacit reproach, the secret bitterness which she divined in the words: "Had you but listened to me, had you but decided not to make this marriage!" . . . There was her mother's perpetual, unique thought; she trembled but for one person — Jacques. Otto did not count. . . . Above all, there was the Major's cold, hard serenity. He had changed much since the Exhibition. It was astonishing to what an extent he had shrivelled up and hardened! His former partial tenderness for his granddaughter — the living likeness of Pépita — had vanished, with a whole host of recollections. There were disquieting blanks — great black holes — in the old man's memory. The most recent years were those which he remembered the least. He lived exclusively among the far-away recollections of his youth, in the glorious days of the Empire. He turned his back on the members of his family, on the sadness and anxieties of the present. Not a sign of emotion appeared on his frigid features. Jean Pierre Ellangé warmed himself only in the sun of the dead. He spent his existence at the Club, playing interminable games at Dominoes or *manille* with old retired officers. When he appeared at table it was but to prophesy another Jena

and the crushing of Prussia. The wretched success at Sarrebrück appeared to him to announce the most overwhelming campaign. When he spoke of "The Emperor," the heavy image of the aged Napoleon III was effaced, and in the depths of his fascinated eyes the Other appeared with his frock-coat and small hat. Amidst the sound of the tocsin, victory followed on victory.

Marthe, with her eyes fixed on the little calendar on which, melancholily, she struck off the days, marked Monday the 8th with the point of her pencil. Washed and with her hair dressed, she was sitting on the bed, on the occasion of Dr. Nichamy's morning visit.

"After to-morrow, doctor? Don't you think I shall be well enough to start on my journey?"

Dr. Nichamy shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Perhaps, perhaps so! But which way will you go?"

From underneath his heavy drooping eyelids he gave her a sharp glance with his little piercing eyes. Marthe gave him an anxious, questioning look. Then he turned towards Mme. Ellangé, who was stirring a bowl of milk, to melt a lump of sugar. . . . Did they know nothing?

"Haven't you read the newspaper? Hasn't M. Ellangé told you?"

"No!" cried Marthe, in an agitated tone. "What has happened?"

"Well, the Strasburg route seems to me to be im-

possible. The day before yesterday, the 4th, there was a big fight at Wissembourg. The Abel Douai division was beaten and the general killed. The army of the Prince Royal of Prussia has invaded the territory. Marshal de Mac-Mahon occupies a strong position and a great encounter is imminent. It is impossible for a woman who is alone to risk travelling in that direction. The trains are crowded with troops. Indeed, it is a question as to whether they are still running."

"Terrible! Terrible!" moaned Mme. Ellangé.

The thought that they had been beaten and that the Prussians were in France stunned her.

"And via Metz?" asked Marthe.

"The same state of commotion reigns there. You would be in the thick of the fight. I cannot take the responsibility of authorising you, depressed as you are, to take that route."

"Then I will go by way of Belgium."

"Yes, you might perhaps be able to get by way of Belgium."

Mme. Ellangé placed the bowl quickly on the little bedside table and taking her courage in both hands, said:

"But tell her, doctor, that that is folly. I have tried to reason with her. She is not in a state to support such fatigue. A lot of progress we shall have made should she be ill on reaching Marburg, where she will find no one but her parents-in-law,—strangers, in fact. There, alone, far from every-

thing and every one, without any news of us, her brothers or her country, she will merely vegetate. . . . Would she not do very much better if she rested for the whole month at Pont-Noyelles? The judicial vacation is about to begin. We shall be beautifully cool in the old house. She can stretch herself out under the pine-trees or else in the orchard, in the evening, on the bank of the Hallue."

But Marthe, with a shake of her head, obstinately negatived the proposal. Mme. Ellangé, at the end of her strength and arguments, fell into silence.

"We will return to the subject in a couple of days," resumed Dr. Nichamy. "At a time like this hours count three times their ordinary length. Who knows what may happen from one moment to another? Who knows what is happening on the Sarre, at Metz, in Strasburg?"

"Great events, my good friend, great events!"

It was the Major who, whilst descending from his bedroom, had heard their voices in Marthe's room. He threw out the reply as he was passing, and his alert step, his whistling were soon heard fading away in the staircase. Military airs, barrack bugle-tunes and camp refrains were constantly being whistled by him.

The next day Marthe, with savage irony, recalled her grandfather's words. The *Mémorial d'Amiens* trembled in her hands. . . . Oh! that scene! Long would she see it. They were breakfasting in the dining-room and a condemnatory silence reigned.

"I have made up my mind to leave on Wednesday," she had just announced. "Via Brussels, Liège and Cologne."—"You are a free agent," M. Ellangé had drily replied. At that moment Julie had brought in the mail. As usual, nothing but newspapers. M. Ellangé had opened one of them and immediately uttered a cry. Marthe rushed to his side, snatched away the sheet and read. . . . General Frossard's army corps, at Forbach, and MacMahon's army, at Reichshoffen, had both been severely defeated.

"What do you say, little one, what do you say?" mumbled the Major.

In an expressionless voice and with beating heart, she continued. One by one the despatches signed Napoleon sounded like a knell. And each time that the illustrious name was announced as appearing at the bottom of a notification of a disaster, the grandfather's fossil-like features twitched nervously. It was as though, every time, a bullet had struck him. Soon he bowed his head and fell into a state of savage muteness.

The shock was so much the more unexpected as, on the previous evening, astonishing rumours had thrown Paris into a state of agitation,— rumours of the taking of Landau, the Prince Royal of Prussia and twenty thousand prisoners. The capital became delirious. Whilst *rente* rose at the Stock Exchange, people began to decorate their windows with flags. Songs celebrated the victory everywhere. Marie

Sasse, recognised in a carriage, sang before the crowd the triumphant notes of the *Marseillaise*. The national air had been chanted on every square. In vain, about one o'clock, had a despatch from Metz, stating that Mac-Mahon had not moved, calmed the peoples' enthusiasm,— in vain had five hundred roughs, enraged at the manœuvre executed on the Stock Exchange, invaded and pillaged the *Corbeille*.[1] The impression still remained good. People still had hope. . . . It was then that the crushing news, bit by bit, fell upon them. Unwearied, Marthe read on. First of all came the Empress-Regent's appeal to the courage of France; then, in fragments, telegraphed from time to time from the Imperial Headquarters, the whole naked, tragic truth. At both ends of the front, under the formidable pressure of the German armies, which had long been exercised and ready, the French forces crumbled away.

Though a few corps were intact and grouped themselves around Metz, Alsace was invaded. The army of the Prince Royal, already victorious at Wissembourg, completed the overthrow of those who were still in its way. Mac-Mahon, routed, fell back on Nancy. . . . Forbach and Reichshoffen came like a double clap of thunder and woke up the nation. Until then, accustomed to victory, it had simply waited for its heroes to gather the usual

[1] The place at the Paris Bourse, or Stock Exchange, where the stock-brokers meet.— Translator.

armfuls of laurels. The extraordinary disorder and sluggishness of the beginning of the war — a state of affairs only partially revealed — had in no way troubled it. Everything would come right in the end! . . . On the contrary, however, everything suddenly collapsed. The imperial government — only yesterday still so imperious — stammered as though it felt the ground suddenly give way beneath its feet and a yawning abyss appear before it.

Disillusioned and deadly pale, M. Ellangé wandered about the room with a silent, ghost-like step. The Major had slipped away without a word. Marthe wept, filled with a horrible uncertainty. What about Otto? What had become of him? Oh! that he had not taken part in the battle, that he was not wounded! And at the same time she thought, with a sorrow and a humiliation the keenness of which surprised her, of the sorrow and humiliation of her native country. . . . So the Prussian army had entered France, was advancing? — and without knowing why, she felt as though her heart were being trampled on, dragged from her body. Mme. Ellangé, the very figure of distress, sat motionless. One joy consoled her in the midst of her sorrow. The 43rd Regiment, Ladmirault's corps, had not taken part in the fight. There was nothing to fear as far as Jacques was concerned.

During that week people lived in a constant state of excitement. Every hour the extent of the reverse and the gravity of the situation became more

apparent. A short but very painful scene took place between M. Ellangé and Louis. The latter had come, between two exercises, to eat at home and take an hour's rest. On the previous day there had been a stormy sitting at the Legislative Body. Senate and Chamber had been summoned by decree and an extraordinary session opened. A new war broke out, this time between the vanquished régime and the opposition. The Ollivier Ministry had resigned and the Empress had hastily improvised the Palikao Cabinet. M. Ellangé bitterly criticised Jules Favre's attitude and his proposal to recall the Emperor to Paris, since his presence with the armies was useless, and to give full power to a Commission of fifteen representatives of the people. . . . By all means let all the national guards in France, including the stationary ones, be armed. But he was strongly against the idea of the country, at such a solemn hour as this, displaying to all the world the spectacle of its political dissensions.

"It is wrong to attempt to overthrow a government when it is endeavouring to save the country," declared M. Ellangé.

"But supposing it is dragging it to destruction?" objected Louis.

"A revolution in the presence of the enemy is a crime."

"Unless it is a vital necessity."

"A heavy responsibility rests on the shoulders of the Republicans. I am of the same opinion as

Granier de Cassagnac. If I were in power, I would immediately hand them over to a Council of War."

"Father, forceful language is nonsense unless it is based on strength."

"We still possess it."

"May God hear you."

In heart and in thought Marthe leant towards her brother's point of view. With that need which youth feels to set its face against established laws, and also because of her sympathy for Louis, whose generous convictions responded to her nature, she became, as in the days before her marriage, one of the opposition. M. Ellangé personified the Empire and the past. Louis was the Republic and the future. Her old convictions, her former faith came back to her. Taken up with the precipitous succession of present events, she no longer returned to the question of an immediate departure, and thought of it less. Moreover, still so tired as she was, and with the burden within her which she felt was a little heavier, was it quite prudent to face a difficult journey and the unknown to-morrow? With affectionate persistence, Dr. Nichamy advised her not to do so. Let her follow, he said, her mother's excellent idea. A fortnight at Pont-Noyelles, amidst the silence and the verdure, would do her the very greatest good and complete her convalescence. Then, without fear, she could say farewell to her parents, if she considered that her conscience compelled her to do so.

Her conscience? Marthe no longer looked into it untroubled. Clearly she was better looked after here and perhaps was less worried than she would be in Marburg. Had she received news from Otto, she would have been less harassed with doubts. Yet his silence did not seem to her to be ominous of evil. Had he been, against all probability, wounded at Reichshoffen, she would have known it by now. What had become of him? What was he doing? . . . She imagined that he had become thin through his hard night-work, his care and devotion shown to the wounded. She would have liked to have known for certain. That would have enabled her to wait, with no less anxiety, certainly, but with greater resignation, for the hours to pass,—hours that sped above them like black clouds in a stormy sky. Every one was as though electrified, restless and, through incessantly waiting for the thunderbolt to fall, had nerves strung to the uttermost. Pieces of news followed one on the other like flashes of lightning and revealed, amidst the darkness, prospective disasters. Three letters came from Jacques describing the enervation of the troops, the distraction of the commanders in chief, the burdensome Emperor. M. Ellangé avoided speaking about him, or, when it was necessary for him to do so, no longer used the old appellation. "His Majesty" seemed to him to be an anachronism; a mockery, Louis went so far as to say, without the Procurator daring to protest. People

might have thought that Napoleon no longer existed had not his phantom been evoked by the decrees signed by the Empress-Regent. But even these documents and Eugénie's name awakened no echo. The sovereigns were but shadows; the Nation alone counted, that great collective body France who, surprised, was now on her feet, knit together by misfortune, preparing and arming herself.

On August 15th, M. Ellangé, after attending the mass of St. Louis, joined his wife and daughter at Pont-Noyelles. They did not celebrate the Emperor's fête. There was neither reception, nor fireworks, nor the firing of cannon. Such a celebration would have seemed an insult to the mourning nation. Before stepping into his cabriolet, the Procurator instructed old Julie to keep a watchful eye on the Major. He had obstinately refused to leave Amiens and his bedroom, where, since Mac-Mahon's retreat, he had shut himself up and took his meals. Except when eating and smoking, he never opened his mouth, but sat, a silent figure surrounded by a cloud of smoke, in his high-backed arm-chair with side head-rests. He gazed into the distance, with an expressionless, disquieting look.

In the old home of her childhood, Marthe unbent and found repose. For entire afternoons she remained stretched out under the trees of the orchard. The juicy fruit scented the air: golden greengages speckled with red, and violet-coloured plums, covered with grey bloom. A large brown holland

parasol, striped with red, and wicker-work arm-chairs had been placed for her under an old cherry-tree. She often descended as far as the Hallue. A large swampy meadow sloped gently towards the little river, which flowed sluggishly along amidst sedges and water-lilies. Rows of poplars trembled in the slightest breeze. The damp earth gave forth its freshness. Those were hours of comfortable existence during which her soul was by slow degrees dissolved and her supple body recovered its strength. . . . She gathered odorous branchlets, a sage or centaury flower, and chewed them without thinking of anything. She participated in the confused life of things, felt herself enveloped in the serenity of the earth and the sweetness of the sky. How fast we hold on to the places where we grew up, where the wonders of life were revealed to us! She came to see that this landscape and the country where she was was part of herself, just as she was part of them. She might have thought, at one time, that she was detached from them, but the truth was she remained attached by mysterious and tenacious bonds. One morning, whilst walking to the shady cemetery where her grandmother lay at rest, she passed some little girls who were playing but who, on seeing her, stopped.

"Do I frighten you?" she asked.

"Oh! no, madam!" replied one of them.

Bursting into laughter, they began to skip about and clap their hands. The biggest then lightly

struck each of her companions, one after the other, and herself on the breast, alternately, repeating each time the words: "Mis-tram-gram-piké-piké-kolégram-bouré-bouré-ratatam-as-tram-gram." Her clear voice uttered these singular syllables very quickly. The last one touched left the circle; soon there was only one left and the chirping band, dispersed, singing:

Une poule sur un mur,
Qui picotait du pain dur,
Picoti-Picota,
Lève la queue et puis s'en va!

"Ah! ah! ah! ah!"

Marthe heard the rhythm of the song rise from the depths of her being. On that very spot she, like these little girls, had pronounced the words of the game and made off singing: "Picoti-Picota."

She mused a long time in the neglected cemetery. Two or three mausoleums, around the family vault of the Ellangés, and a few recent pieces of sculpture alone attested that the dead ones were recollected. Even this recollection, considering the commonness of the bead wreaths and the faded flowers, seemed so precarious. The green and disjointed gravestones, scattered in the tall grass, the fragments of crosses, the moss-covered inscriptions, and, there and there, the uneven earth of ancient tombs spoke so eloquently of the vanity of life, the irresistible, incessant equalisation which time brings with it. . . . On the black marble plaque fastened to the wall of

their little chapel she read, in an undertone, the long family list, the names of Ellangés of former days. . . . They went back more than two hundred years. . . . She found consolation in the ancientry of her family. . . . She became part of a distant past and at the same time she enlarged her life. . . . She felt that she was not an ephemeral, useless form but a link in the quivering chain. . . . And already the next link — the child who would continue that chain — was being forged within her. . . . Dull blows indicated its presence. . . . It said: "I am here."

She put her hand to her side. Would it be an Ellangé? No, a Rudheimer! . . . And to the same extent as she felt anchored, by those of her race who reposed there, to something stable, which she could not easily define, but the sweetness and strength of which she experienced, so did she feel dragged away into the distance and unattached by the one who would come. . . . How this corner of Pont-Noyelles, where, with a feeling of joyful surprise, she once more became conscious of her primitive ego,— how this patch of France, where for two centuries beings of her blood and name had lived, loved and suffered, had escaped from her mind, and how, without effort, they were returning home at the decisive hour! . . . Thanks to this little neglected cemetery Marthe found herself reinstated in her family and country. But at the same minute the movement of a Rudheimer informed her that she had renounced of her own free will. . . .

The ancestral chain, to which she found it so comforting to hold on, abruptly ended with her. She had chosen another family, another country. Her son or daughter would belong to them. . . . He or she would be neither French nor an Ellangé. . . . But a Prussian, a Rudheimer. . . . For the first time this certainty was painful to her. . . . She dismissed the future from her mind. Her present suffering was enough. She had not regretted France when it was happy and triumphant. . . . And now, on seeing it conquered and unfortunate, she realised to what an extent she was French and an Ellangé.

The rumour of important engagements in the neighbourhood of Metz was confirmed. Marthe had to forget her own troubles in order to restore a little courage to her mother. Since the arrival of the news of the 14th she no longer contained herself. On the day after M. Ellangé's arrival at Pont-Noyelles it was known that the German troops had profited by the movement of Bazaine's army from Metz, with the Emperor, to attack his rear-guards. An indecisive battle had been fought on the right bank of the Moselle,—a fight in which the corps of Generals Decaen and Ladmirault had taken part. . . . A few days later people learnt, but in a very confused manner, that communications were cut, and that fresh battles had been fought, this time on the left bank, around Rezonville and Gravelotte. The Emperor was reported to have

previously left the army to join the fresh troops, the bulk of Mac-Mahon's corps, which were being collected at Châlons. The most contradictory rumours were afloat. According to despatches from English or French sources, the French armies had achieved a bloody but considerable triumph. Part of the Prussian army was said to have been routed in the Jaumont quarries. On the other hand, the enemy's despatches spoke of the success of the armies of Steinmetz and Frederic Charles, and of Bazaine, his retreat cut off, having been driven back under Metz. . . . On both sides the losses were recognised to be formidable. People spoke of no fewer than thirty thousand killed and wounded.

The mother was haunted by a sinister presentiment. Ceaselessly Mme. Ellangé repeated: —

"I am sure that Jacques has been killed!"

M. Ellangé, unable to control himself any longer, put his horse into his carriage on the 25th, and set off for Amiens, where, after seeing Louis and the Major, he intended to proceed to Paris. There, perhaps, he would be able to obtain some information.

Alone in the large house the two women wandered about like lost souls. In vain did Marthe attempt to divert her mother by getting her to sit under the pine-trees with her work. They carried with them the current issues of the Amiens newspapers and those of the previous day from Paris. The journals arrived after luncheon, which they ate in silence and without an appetite. Then Mme. Ellangé

installed herself in her old Gibraltar arm-chair, and whilst she was knitting one of her eternal mufflers Marthe went through the newspapers, one by one. She read everything,— sometimes reread. . . . In the midst of the vague narratives a name or a detail would arrest their thoughts, and they would endeavour to fill in the picture. . . . Then the terrible feeling of uncertainty would seize them again. . . . By dint of sharing Mme. Ellangé's fears, Marthe thought less about Otto. Her brother alone was in danger. She received a shock, however, when the postman, whom they went to meet every day, immediately on rising from table, waved in the distance, with the newspapers, a large envelope.

" A letter for Mme. Rudheimer," he said.

It bore the Marburg postmark. Marthe recognised the pastor's trembling handwriting. Hastily breaking open the envelope, she found three letters inside from Otto, together with one from her father-in-law. Her husband had addressed them to the Burgerstrasse, under the impression that, immediately after her recovery, Marthe would have returned to their little house. So explained Herr Rudheimer between two verses from the Bible. He and his wife expressed wishes for the prompt and complete re-establishment of their dear daughter-in-law. Let her come! Everything was ready for her. . . . Her eyes dim with tears, Marthe hastily read the sheets which Otto had torn from

his notebook. Scribbled in pencil, they had been written piecemeal, whenever he had been able to find a moment to spare, amidst rush and disorder. . . . The ambulances were filled to overflowing. . . . The wounded were ever pouring in; there was a nightmare of operations. . . . Otto lived in the midst of blood and sanies. . . . The last letter, dated the 20th and more carefully thought out, was one long cry in favour of the end of this reign of terror and of the recommencement of a tender, peaceful life. . . . Considering the rate the war was progressing, Otto hoped it would soon be over. He hoped that his brother-in-law Jacques would come out of it safe and sound, like himself. He congratulated himself on the fact that he was serving near Metz, against another army. Thus he was spared a great horror. . . . Ah! when would he be able to resume a calm and happy life? . . . His dear wife would await, without any fresh shock, the blessed hour of her deliverance. He embraced her sadly, but with his heart filled, at that idea, with a very sweet hope.

As they were crossing the dining-room to go and sit under the pines, Marthe said: —

"Would you like to read them, mamma?"

And without thinking she handed her the letters. Mme. Ellangé took them, but no sooner had she cast her eyes on the writing than she vivaciously thrust them from her, saying: —

"I don't know German."

Marthe sighed and began to translate. . . . But she immediately perceived that her mother was listening without hearing. . . . What was Otto to her? . . . The stranger, the enemy. . . . Only one being existed — her son Jacques. . . . Folding up the first letter without reading it through, Marthe placed it with the others. . . . The image of her husband became dim. . . . That of her brother rose before her mental eye — clear and besetting. . . . But, however much she tried, she could not succeed in imagining Jacques as he was at that moment. She saw him leaning over her bed and embracing her, whilst she murmured: "Let us hope."

Mechanically she repeated: —

"Let us hope!"

But the words sounded so false that Mme. Ellangé and Marthe, having looked into each others eyes, turned away their heads and burst into tears. At that moment a step was heard in the vestibule. The door opened. It was M. Ellangé, whose arrival along the road, a short time before, had escaped their notice.

He was so pale, so haggard that the mother's heart guessed the truth. . . . With a great cry and outstretched arms, Mme. Ellangé rushed forward.

"Jacques? . . . My son?"

He bowed his head without replying.

"Dead!"

Seeing her stagger, Marthe had already seized her by the waist. But Mme. Ellangé, with a gesture

of instinctive repulsion, as though her daughter's hands were stained with some of her brother's blood, freed herself.

"No! no! Leave me alone!" she cried.

"Mamma! . . . Oh! mamma!"

Marthe, overwhelmed with grief, understood. Jacques! Her brother! . . . It was her husband's brothers, it was Otto, who had killed him!

VI

HENCEFORTH and at every hour Marthe felt an incessant reproach weighing upon her. She detected it in silences, allusions and reticences. The walls of the house, the trees in the garden, the things which Jacques had formerly touched, his closed room, their black clothes,— everything brought up the unjust and tenacious accusation against her. One alone paid for all: Otto was the incarnation of the execrated race, the symbol of invasion and murder.

At first, however, after Mme. Ellangé's involuntary gesture, a sense of their common grief had brought mother and daughter together. With haggard faces, they listened to the father's broken narrative. At the ministry, in Paris, they knew nothing, had been unable to tell him anything. It was on his return to Amiens that the Procurator had found a letter from Lieutenant Charbalyé, Jacques' friend, the comrade who had been promoted at the same time as himself. . . . Whilst pronouncing these words, M. Ellangé had been unable to resist glancing at Marthe. . . . She reddened, so much do the most diverse feelings mingle even at a time of great trouble. Charbalyé, poor

fellow! Yes, if she had followed the wishes of her parents, if she had married him instead of Otto, less rancour would have infested their lives. . . . With trembling hand, the father had unfolded the dirty, crumpled paper. Charbalyé, who had been taken prisoner at Gravelotte, on August 18th, and sent to Mannheim, had been able to write these hasty lines in secret, in the train, and address them to one of his relatives at Geneva. After a six days' journey they had at last arrived, like a murderous bullet which finds its billet.

"Sir, however cruel it may be, I must carry out the promise which your dear Jacques and I made to each other. . . . He fell like a hero, struck in the heart, on December 14th, at half past eight o'clock in the evening. We had been fighting since four o'clock in the afternoon and the day seemed to have been won when, in the gathering darkness, we were unexpectedly attacked by a compact body of infantry. There was a momentary panic and our company disbanded. Jacques and I succeeded in arresting the movement of our sections and in advancing, whilst the order to charge was being sounded on all sides. We were running side by side when I saw him put his hand to his breast and suddenly fall. . . . I was unable to stop myself at that moment, but when the Prussians had been repulsed I found his body, half an hour afterwards, on the very spot where he had fallen. It was al-

ready cold. I closed his eyes, and never shall I forget, sir, the serene expression on his face, that air of pride and peace. He in no way suffered. Happy are those who died thus, believing in victory. I almost envy him. His eyes have not beheld what ours behold: the excruciating pain of defeat and the shame of captivity. In your sorrow and that of your family, you have, sir, my heartfelt sympathy.

"HENRI CHARBALYÉ.

"P. S.— Your son's body was buried, with others of our regiment who were killed, in a trench at the foot of a pine-tree which I have marked, alongside the road from Mey to Villers l'Orme. I will show you the spot, but God alone knows when."

How many times this sad letter filled them with despair! Mme. Ellangé carried it about with her inside her bodice. . . . During the first few days she was ever drawing it forth. And when Marthe said to her, "Come now, mamma! You are making yourself ill. Give it to me!" she gave her daughter such a look that she no longer insisted but bent her head. "Who are you?" Mme. Ellangé's eyes asked. "Jacques' sister? No. You are Otto's wife. It is one of his fellows who committed this crime. You are accomplices." At such times as those Marthe felt a desire to leave everything behind her, to flee like a wounded ani-

mal. . . . Marburg and its tranquillity — the quiet little provincial town where only the old folk remained — called to her. There, she told herself, she could bury herself in the silence of her sorrow; there, she would be less tormented, less tortured. . . . Then, as her mother's excitement subsided and the poor woman fell into a state of deadly depression, Marthe felt that her presence at home was more necessary.

Mme. Ellangé, seeing her injustice, endeavoured to remove all cause of irritation between them. She felt annoyed at having hurt her daughter's feelings, as though Marthe could be considered as responsible, as though, on one side as on the other, they were not all of them the playthings of a blind and merciless Fate! Insensibly, after the first movement of revolt, she came, as a Christian woman should, to lay her sorrows at the feet of Jesus and humbly submit to the Divine will. . . . Every morning she went to weep at the little church, where, with her face between her hands, she remained kneeling for hours together.

Less of a believer than her mother, Marthe could not resign herself to accept the laws of Providence so unreservedly. Could it be possible, she asked, that it manifested itself by such impenetrable ways? She accompanied her mother as far as the porch, an ancient Roman vault where, within the interstices of the stones, wallflowers grew. The whole time that Mme. Ellangé was praying, Marthe prom-

enaded along the cemetery's narrow paths. Its wall overhung the road and the shadow of a tall lime-tree formed a circle on the hot stones. The bitter odour of box mingled with the strong scent of fennel which grew in tall bunches in an abandoned corner. She sat down, feeling that her brain was a void. Around her little girls were dancing in a ring. Their silvery voices had all the freshness of a babbling brook. They sang very ancient airs, the words of which, learnt in her childhood, rose from the depths of Marthe's mind, to lull, with their sweetness the disorder of her soul. She allowed herself to follow the rhythm, repeated the ancient words:

Bonjour, madame la Marjolaine,
Avez-vous des filles à marier,
Avez-vous des filles à marier?

J'en ai une qui est bien belle,
Qui porte de l'or, de la dentelle,
Mais je ne puis pas vous la donner,
Mais je ne puis pas vous la donner. . . .

Ni pour l'or, ni pour l'argent,
Ni pour l'or, ni pour l'argent.
Ni pour les grilles du couvent!

Or else it was the melancholy and lilting refrain, to the tune of which the aged Julie had so many times dandled her on her knees:

File, file, ma quenouille!
Le temps passe, le temps va.
File, file, ma quenouille!
Le temps passe, le temps va.

Si le fil brouillé s'embrouille,
Nous le désembrouillerons. . . .
File, file, ma quenouille!
Le temps passe, le temps va.

"Le temps passe, le temps va!"— Marthe often found herself humming this besetting refrain. Yes; "time passes, time slips away!" It carried them along with it,— poor inert things, powerless pieces of wreckage. Like a mighty wave, it swept them along into the darkness. . . . Whither were they going? . . . M. Ellangé alone attempted to react against the depressing pessimism which had invaded them. Since they had come within the shadow of the wing of Death, he had summoned all his stoicism to his aid. He stiffened against sorrow. With dry eyes, he applied himself to his work,— created new occupations. He re-opened *dossiers* which had been laid aside, absorbed himself in works of history or law. He had replaced Horace, whose smiling philosophy was untimely, on his book-shelves, and taken to turning the pages of Lucretius. He feigned to take no interest in the newspapers and the sinister confusion of their items of news. But he carried all of them into his bedroom in the evening and the next morning appeared with red and swollen eyelids. He passed part of the night in weeping.

People knew nothing, except that the army of the Prince Royal of Prussia was marching towards Paris. Strasburg, bombarded and set on fire, was but an island in the midst of a submerged Alsace.

Neither Bazaine nor Metz showed any sign of life. Mac-Mahon was the only hope. Meanwhile, through the wide-open breach, the invading forces poured in. Everywhere there was stupor, disorder and desertion. Four Uhlans had conquered Nancy; five, Châlons. Paris already imagined it saw their pointed helmets. The capital was getting in supplies and arming itself, amidst the immense commotion of the national guard, which, suddenly formed, was determined to withstand a siege under protection of the forts. . . . The provinces were following her example. From the enthusiasm of the early days of the campaign, people had fallen to a state of dejection, fearing the worst would happen. The silence which followed on the formidable convulsion of the great battles under Metz, still not well known, was pregnant with nightmares and threats. A black prelude to the supreme crash of the storm. Then, at the very end of August, Paris and France breathed again. The army of the Prince Royal had turned back and deviated towards the East. People spoke of successful operations. Mac-Mahon and Bazaine were manœuvring in concert, and, their junction completed, would crush the conquerors of yesterday, disseminated as they now were. . . . Passionately, Marthe followed the vicissitudes of the struggle. Under the pressure of events and without her noticing it, a rapid revolution was taking place within her. Her Germanic veneer was becoming thinner and thinner. Once more, in

heart and in thought, she was wholly French. Yet she had not ceased to love Otto. But, as much through profound affection as through equity, she separated, isolated him from his surroundings.

One morning in September,— it was Sunday, the 4th,— M. Ellangé, unnerved, he said, by the strange rumours which were again afloat, proposed to take luncheon in Amiens. They would thus be within nearer reach of information. Moreover, they would be able to embrace grandfather and Louis. With a weary gesture, Mme. Ellangé agreed. Still bending under her burden, she took no interest in anything. . . . There was a lack of life in her child-like eyes, in her pale blue pupils. She had the appearance and the movement of a shadow. Whilst the victoria was taking them towards their house on the Boulevard du Mail, Marthe, astonished, contemplated her father. Seated on the flap-seat, he was trying to preserve his customary serenity. But, notwithstanding his efforts, he was unable to hide his emotion, which took the form of a nervous twitching of his cheek.

"What is the matter, father?" asked Marthe.

He ended by confessing, just before they reached Amiens.

"On waking this morning I received an express message from the President of the Court of Appeal. Yesterday evening he was in Paris and saw the Secretary of the Minister of Justice."

"Well?"

"It is said that Bazaine has been unable to cross the lines at Metz, where the Prussians surround him, and that Mac-Mahon's army, thrown back towards Sedan, has suffered a disaster."

"Oh!"

As white as a sheet and feeling as though all her blood had rushed to her heart, Marthe clasped her hands.

"But that is not all. The Marshal, seriously wounded, is reported to have handed over the command to General Wimpfen, the whole army and the town is said to have capitulated, and even the Emperor himself is believed to be a prisoner."

"The Emperor a prisoner?" stammered Mme. Ellangé. "But, Lucien, what will that mean?"

He gave a start. Yes; it meant the end of the régime,— a revolution. The Imperial Procurator? His position? What did that matter? . . . He had served his country for the past thirty-five years and well merited a little rest. . . . His sole ambition was to live henceforth in solitude, with his books and his sorrow. . . . Did personal anxieties count on the occasion of such a catastrophe as this? . . . No, it was not a question of himself. . . . He continued, in a pained voice:

"Yes, Marthe, that is what we have come to."

"You were a prophet, father. You foresaw everything."

"Not that! no, not that!"

The carriage stopped in front of the house. At

the sound of the wheels a window was opened. Julie appeared and exclaimed:

"Is it possible?"

Her placid face was agitated. That an Empire should crumble to the ground, was to her a matter of little consequence, but that her employers should come home unexpectedly, without ordering luncheon, was an extraordinary thing. Hastily closing the window she descended and appeared on the threshold. She assisted Mme. Ellangé to descend from the victoria and greeted Marthe. As devoted as a dog, she had no other horizon than that of her servitude, no other liberty than the length of her chain. . . . She wore bran-new mourning.

"M. Ellangé is there?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Procureur."

In M. Ellangé's eyes, there was, in his own house, no other M. Ellangé than the Major. He himself was only "M. le Procureur"— for how many hours longer? — or, more familiarly, M. Lucien.

Julie, with the rough frankness of an old servant, touched her forehead and said:

"He is there, but his head —"

Whilst M. Ellangé ascended to his father's room and Julie fussed about the kitchen, grumbling, the two women laid the tablecloth. Soon Louis appeared. They had not seen him since their departure for Pont-Noyelles. A long embrace united them. Words between them were useless. Mme. Ellangé feasted her eyes upon him; he was now the

only one of her children left; he was the incarnation of the two others, compensated for them,— Jacques for ever lost and Marthe, the married one, whom she soon would lose again.

"Poor Marthe!" exclaimed Louis.

They held each other by the hand. And Marthe also felt that she loved him as though he were two persons. . . . She was infinitely grateful to him for pitying instead of blaming her. Humbly she stood before him. Everything in her seemed to say: "You are good to pardon me, to understand that it is not my fault."

Louis quickly moved aside.

"Hush!" he recommended.

He had heard the staircase creak under the footsteps of his father and grandfather. The Major was in ignorance as to what had happened. . . . His mind was not very solid now. . . . Let them spare him as much as possible.

"I have persuaded grandfather to come down," said M. Ellangé, on entering the room.

He supported the Major, whose tall body had become extraordinarily bowed, by the arm. The old man, as he hobbled in on his stick, was almost doubled in two. He had grown thin. And his beard, which he had allowed to grow for three weeks, gave his stony-looking face, with his large moustaches a rough and crabbed air, the aspect of a white boar. He stared suspiciously at his daughter-in-law and granddaughter. Mme. Ellangé,

overcome with emotion, hid herself to wipe away her tears.

"Good morning, grandfather."

"Aren't you going to kiss us?"

Louis and Marthe approached with extended foreheads. He appeared to recollect and tapped them on the cheeks.

"Yes, yes, you are a good little girl, Marthon," he said. "But why is she in black on the day of her first communion? . . . Good morning, Jacques. . . . Ah! ah! there you are in the new uniform of Saint Cyr. . . . A corporal already? . . . I congratulate you. . . . And what about Louis? Where is Louis? . . . I don't see him. . . . At school on such a day as this! You ought to have got him a holiday, Lucien."

He sat down in his seat, looking at everything by stealth. And whilst Julie was placing a golden omelette in the middle of the table he rubbed his hands together and cracked his bones.

"Nothing has changed here," he said, "since my return from Brazil. . . . Ah! ah! There's a fine bacon omelette! The Emperor at St. Cloud doesn't eat one as good as that!"

With childish joy, he greedily licked his pendent lips. The spectacle was so sad that every one, forgetting his or her own sorrow, thought only of the nation's misfortune. Above the derisive repast, above their commonplace phrases and evasive words, soared the image of France.

They had just seated the Major, with his pipe, in an arm-chair in front of the window when Dr. Nichamy entered.

"I saw your carriage pass in the distance, in the Rue de Noyon," he said. "I suppose you've heard the news?"

"No," replied M. Ellangé, indicating his father with a significant look. "I was about to go out to get particulars."

"Grandfather is sleeping," said Louis.

The Major, with his head thrown back, was faintly snoring; his extinguished pipe had rolled on to his knees. Dr. Nichamy, out of breath, told his tale quickly.

"I have just come from the Prefecture. M. de Guigné is in Paris. It appears that there is a night-sitting at the Chamber, where Jules Favre has laid on the table a bill proclaiming the Emperor's deposition and the appointment of an executive commission. . . . They have separated without coming to a decision. They are to meet again at two o'clock."

"So there is no doubt about it?" asked M. Ellangé. "I refer to Mac-Mahon and the Emperor!"

Dr. Nichamy drew a piece of paper from his pocket.

"Here, read that. I copied it down at the Prefecture. It had just arrived."

M. Ellangé, after making sure that the Major could not hear, read aloud: "*Proclamation of the*

Council of Ministers to the French People. Frenchmen, a great misfortune has overcome the country. . . . After an heroic struggle lasting three days. . . ." One by one the brief phrases, announcing that the capitulation had been signed, that 40,000 men and the Emperor were prisoners, struck their blow. . . . But Paris was in a state of defence; an army would soon be ready under her walls; another was being formed on the banks of the Loire. . . . M. Ellangé's voice scanned the concluding words: "The government, in agreement with the public powers, will take any steps which the gravity of the situation demands."

Dr. Nichamy wiped his forehead.

"It is the end!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," moaned the Procurator. "*Finis Galliæ!*"

"No, father, it is the end of the Empire, that is all. France remains. The real war is beginning."

Louis' voice trembled with enthusiasm and anger.

"Meanwhile," reflected Dr. Nichamy, "I don't see what measures the government . . ."

Louis interrupted him.

"There are no other measures than to proclaim the Republic and declare the country in danger. As in '92. Let this government of incapables disappear!"

"But," murmured the Procurator, "what about the Empress-Regent and the Prince Imperial?"

"Why not Marie Louise and the King of Rome? As deliverers, I suppose?"

M. Ellangé was about to protest when Marthe placed a hand on his shoulder and said:

"Look, father."

Every one turned round, stupefied. A hollow voice, which seemed to issue from the tomb, uttered the words:

"1815 . . . the Invasion!"

During that tragic minute all remained motionless. . . . The Major, awaked by the first lines of the Proclamation, had heard everything. By a long effort he had risen to his feet and there he stood like a statue of the past. To his deaf ears the words had at first been unintelligible. Then the drift of the terrible truth had dawned upon him. . . . But the shock had been too great. A tumult of ideas rose and danced in his childish brain. Napoleon. . . . The Invasion. . . . Past and Present became confused. A look of unexpressible suffering appeared on his face. . . . At the same time that his blood, in a red wave, mounted to his forehead, large tears silently flowed from the corners of his dead eyes. He tried to speak, but only raucous sounds issued from his open lips. At the same time that his reason returned to him, a little of his life slipped away; the hemiplegy had affected the whole of his right side. With his mouth askew, he slid to the ground.

Assisted by Dr. Nichamy, Louis and Marthe, M. Ellangé carried the old man, whose large body, though now a ruin, still contained an air of majesty, to his room. No one thought any longer of rebelling against the relentlessness of fate; every one submitted with bowed heads. Marthe and her mother set to work to act as nurses at the bedside of the Major, on whom the doctor had lavished a number of little cares. . . . An infusion was warming in a kettle, over a nightlight, on the bedside table. Marthe was dreaming with wide-open eyes, seated at the head of the bed in which the old man was now calmly resting after a period of agitation. The three men had gone out, to rush from the Palace of Justice to the Prefecture and from the Prefecture to the railway station in search of news. The streets were filled with an anxious crowd. It had been decided not to return that evening to Pont-Noyelles, but to await events. Moreover, it would be two or three days before the Major could be carried there.

It was long past nightfall when the Procurator returned home, alone. At five o'clock, the hour at which his leave expired, Louis had gone back to his post at the citadel. . . . M. Ellangé, in company with the doctor and their friend, the First President, had waited at the Prefecture. . . . At last, at half-past eight, a telegram had arrived. He copied down the text, because of the beauty of the document, he explained. Sarcastically, whilst his wife and

Marthe were watching over the sleeper, he read it out:

"French Republic. Ministry of the Interior. The destitution of the sovereign has been pronounced at the Legislative Body. The Republic has been proclaimed at the Hôtel de Ville. A Government of National Defence, composed of eleven members, all deputies of Paris, has been constituted and ratified by popular acclamation. The names are Emmanuel Arago, Crémieux, Jules Favre, Jules Ferry, Gambetta, Garnier-Pagès, Glais-Bizoin, Pelletan, Picard, Rochefort and J. Simon. General Trochu is at one and the same time maintained as Governor of Paris and appointed Minister of War, in the place of General de Palikao.

"For the Government of the National Defence.

"The Minister of the Interior,

"LÉON GAMBETTA."

Three days later M. Ellangé heard — without surprise — of his dismissal. He was replaced by René Goblet, one of the most highly esteemed barristers of the Amiens bar. Jules Lardière, a Republican and devoted to Gambetta, had, on the 5th, succeeded M. de Guigné at the Prefecture. When Mme. Ellangé moaned over the brutality of these changes, her husband replied, simply:

"That is quite right. New men are required for new times. . . . We shall be able to set off again for Pont-Noyelles."

However, he retarded their departure until the 11th. He could not succeed in disinteresting himself so quickly in the affairs of the town. First of all, it was Dr. Nichamy, who had been appointed on the renewal of the Municipal Council, who detained him. . . . What, under present circumstances, was the duty of the Council? Ought it to retire? . . . Thus the members would avoid the conflicts which, in all probability, would arise in the midst of political hatred and ardour. . . . M. Dauphin, the Major, hesitated. Dr. Nichamy, fat and pacific, leant towards retirement. But M. Ellangé dissuaded him. "No," he said, "you are useful on the ambulance and succour committee. Dauphin and all of you ought to remain. You are known and you are esteemed. . . . God alone knows what our poor town is destined to behold. You, at least, will face all dangers, those of a foreign invasion and those of interior anarchy." Then, after the election of the officers of the mobilised national guard, came their presentation, in the midst of great pomp, on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. M. Ellangé and Louis were present, mingled with the crowd, which was filled with patriotic enthusiasm. . . . Perhaps his son was right, thought M. Ellangé, and the real war was only about to commence? His reason prompted him, however, to wish that they would rather think of peace. . . . What could be expected of improvised armies when professional troops had failed to obtain victory? By treating with the en-

emy to-day, they would obtain less burdensome conditions. The Republic did not inherit the faults of the Empire, if faults it had had. . . . By laying stress on Metz and the still formidable army of the Rhine, and even on the new corps which were in formation, the government could honourably enter into *pourparlers*.

"And do you imagine that the enemy would respond?" objected Louis. "What they want — they have said so in a sufficiently loud voice — is nothing less than Alsace and Lorraine. Can we hand them over with a glad heart when Paris is on her feet, when Bazaine has 180,000 men on the model of Jacques, and when, behind those ramparts, the whole of France is arming herself? . . . Beloved France! the Empire lost her but the Republic will win her back again!"

M. Ellangé witnessed this national ardour with a pride mingled with sadness and fear. He envied Louis' youth and activity. He would have liked to have devoted himself, as he was doing, to a useful task. He suffered through being old,— a prisoner, as it were, of his age, his life, and his antiquated opinions; he suffered at the thought that his fidelity to convictions and misfortune was interpreted as "bonapartism." . . . The more people took this view, the more his frigid dignity increased. Under a hard ironical mask, he hid his face of distress and sorrow.

The orchard at Pont-Noyelles was made glorious

by the luminous afternoons of September. Whilst the Major, stretched in an arm-chair on wheels, warmed his carcass in the sun, the ex-Procurator and his wife, drawn nearer to each other by the revolutionary storm, sat motionless under the striped parasol. Few were their words, but their sorrow spoke in unison. Sometimes, hand clasped hand. They thought of the dear one who had disappeared, his glorious death, and of the anonymous knoll on the road from Mey to Villers-l'Orme. . . . They thought of Louis and the dangers which he would run if the enemy came as far north as Amiens. They thought of Marthe, looked long at her when, after she had bent over the invalid's chair, she walked away,— her heavy figure apparent in her crape dress — and resumed her eternal promenade on the low-lying walk on the bank of the Hallue. . . . . Poor Marthe! sorrowful wife and mother! She was the one, after all, who bore the heaviest burden. . . . Under what reflexions did she not bend? What crushing weight bowed down her neck, the delicate whiteness of which formed a spot in the distance between her hair and her dark dress? . . . And what about the child who would soon be born,— that son of Otto? . . . M. Ellangé detested it already, just as he detested its father, that Prussian who had stolen their daughter from them and who was now, in the midst of blood and ruin, completing his conquest!

When out of sight and hidden by the tall poplars, Marthe drew Otto's two last letters from her pocket. One written after Sedan, and still vibrating with the enthusiasm which then filled every German heart, greeted in this unprecedented triumph the end of the war. Otto had not yet heard of the misfortunes which had overtaken them: the death of Jacques and the Major's stroke. . . . He understood why, being fatigued, she had prolonged her sojourn with her family, and he rejoiced at the thought of their approaching reunion. The second letter, also transmitted from Marburg by Herr Rudheimer, was in reply to the one in which Marthe announced her brother's death and her decision to remain at Amiens until the end of hostilities. . . . In elevated, firm and pitying terms, Otto associated himself with her loss and, foreseeing that the campaign would still be a long one, because of the agitation in Paris and the provinces, implored Marthe, as soon as her services were no longer necessary at Pont-Noyelles, to return to Marburg, via Belgium, and resume her position in the home. He concluded by citing the beautiful words used by Goethe at the end of *Hermann and Dorothea:* "Let our union, in this general upheaval, be all the more close and durable; let us together courageously face our misfortunes; let us think of holding fast to days which ought to be dear to us, and of the possession of those good things which can beautify them. He

whose mind vacillates in these agitated times extends the disaster; but he whose soul is unchangeable creates a world over which he reigns."

Nervously she crumpled the paper, which was soiled on the back with a large blood stain. Doubtless Otto had transcribed the poet's verses on the corner of a badly wiped operating table. . . . A feeling of anger at such serenity shot through her. It was easy to show oneself superior in the moment of victory. . . . For the first time since their separation she felt a new impression as regards her husband. Until then she had retained his image and love within her intact. Not a particle of all this red mud had rebounded on to his dear noble face.

She stopped, startled. For a moment Otto ceased to be the man whom, in his flesh and mind, she adored,— her husband, her companion, the father of the sweet little being who leapt and breathed within her. . . . He was a German, *the* German — he was the enemy. She stifled a cry. No! That was both foolish and unjust. And summoning all her reason to her aid, she said: "I do not wish,— I ought not to think that. We are neither of us responsible, we are but unfortunate creatures, who ought, courageously and together, to face misfortune. Let at least our affection and reciprocal confidence emerge unharmed from these harrowing hours!" But at the idea of travelling alone to Marburg she felt suffocated. She felt that she would die there. She needed the air of France. As

long as this nightmare lasted she must remain where she was, in her place as a Frenchwoman, in the country and the home of her childhood. . . . Moreover, she was indispensable to her disabled mother. Who would watch over and care for, as though he were a child, her aged grandfather, who continually needed wheeling from place to place, feeding, etc? . . . Otto would understand. She would write to him that very evening.

But the letter remained unwritten and the days slipped by. Their monotony, at one and the same time interminable and brief, revolved around the Major, who, little by little, was getting weaker. His soul, however, continued in the depths of his feverish eyes, to burn low, like the flame of a night-light. In losing part of his bodily powers, he had recovered part of his reason. With his left hand behind his ear and an eager look, he took in all that was said around him; he insisted on being present whenever the newspaper was read aloud. Thus, under the plum-trees of Pont-Noyelles, in the warm clearness of those beautiful summer days, the three generations felt to the depths of their souls the dizzy confusion of the hours. Those tumultuous hours ended in the peaceful atmosphere of the little orchard and in the consternation of their hearts. They brought with them, like the roar of the tide, the ever-approaching echo of the on-coming invasion.

The day after Sedan the army of the Prince of

Saxony and that of the Prince Royal of Prussia,—Otto's army!—had moved forward with an extended front. If, on the 5th, Montmédy had repulsed a sudden attack, the 6th German corps had entered defenceless Reims and, on the 8th, taken possession of Laon and its citadel, which had capitulated without a shot being fired. . . . The black wave rolled on from town to town. On the 15th it was at Villers-Cotterets, Senlis and Château-Thierry. In front of it, through the destruction of the railways, the circle in the centre of which Paris was panting grew smaller. Between the 17th and the 19th, by crowning the heights and barring the roads, the investment was completed. Amiens and the North were cut off from the capital, isolated from the rest of France. . . . Only three members of the government, Crémieux, Admiral Fourichon and Glais-Bizoin, delegated to Tours, were charged with the organisation of the defence in the provinces and the maintenance of relations with the foreign powers, whom M. Thiers, entrusted with a semi-official mission, went to consult and solicit. But the nation had only herself to count upon. On the 20th Jules Favre came into conflict with the conqueror's voracity and unreasonableness. Before signing any armistice and as long as there were any soldiers or arms left, Bismarck would accept nothing less than the following inacceptable conditions: the surrender of Bitche, Toul, and Strasburg, the garrison of the last named a prisoner of war, the

occupation of one of the forts of Paris, and the continuation of hostilities around Metz!

M. Ellangé confessed that Louis' anticipations were only too correct. These conditions were nothing more nor less than a demand for Alsace and Lorraine. Consequently Jules Favre's reply — "not a stone of our fortresses, not an inch of our territory"— seemed to him, however much he might be lacking in sympathy towards the barrister, to be worthy of a French minister. However, on September 27th, Strasburg succumbed amidst flames. Soissons was invested. Around the legions of the stationary national guard, which defended Amiens, Abbeville and Péronne, an army was formed, under the control of the Prefect Testelin, general commissary for the defence in the North, and his assistant Colonel Favre.

Finally, on October 8th, people heard that Gambetta, who had left Paris in a balloon to stir up the provinces and his colleagues at Tours, had fallen near Clermont and reached Amiens in the night. Unable to contain himself any longer, M. Ellangé hastened, in spite of the mildness of the autumn, to leave Pont-Noyelles and return to the town.

The air was so mild that morning that, after having installed her mother in the barouche next to the Major, Marthe stepped with her father into the cabriolet. A jaunting car, with the servants and the luggage, followed in the rear. As they proceeded on their way, M. Ellangé, with the end of

his whip, pointed out the towers of the cathedral which rose up in the distance, dominating the widespread town, violet and brown, with its slated and tiled roofs.

"Do you recollect, Marthon, when you were ten years of age? One day we climbed to the gallery which, above a forest of counterforts and bell-turrets, runs round the building. It was just such an autumn morning as this. . . . The swifts were screaming and circling around the steeple. I held you by the hand, so that you would not be dizzy. Pointing to Amiens and the country which you could see as far as the horizon, you said to me: 'So all that, father, is France?'"

"Yes, I remember,— and also what you replied: 'All that, first of all, and then a thousand, thousand times more.'"

She became silent, meditative. M. Ellangé continued:

"It was too large for you to comprehend. So you added, opening your little arms, 'No, to me France is what I see here,— look, what I clasp to my heart!' And you joined your hands as though to embrace what you saw as far as the horizon."

She lowered her eyelids to check her desire to weep. . . . How well she understood to-day what her childish instinct had whispered to her! . . . She was seized with a sudden impulse.

"Listen, father. I will write to-morrow to Otto. Considering the turn that events have taken, no one

can say now when the war will end. It may last months and months. . . . I will not leave you as long as a single German soldier remains in the country."

With a passionate look, she took in the narrow horizon in the centre of which rose the cathedral, with its two tall towers and its spire, and beyond, as far as the frontiers, the immense image of the Fatherland. She would have liked, as when she was a little child up there, to have opened her arms and pressed the dear bleeding country to her heart. . . . Marburg, the quiet intimate evenings they had spent under the light of the lamp, the piano in the dining-room of the Burgerstrasse, the feudal town perched with an Italian air on its hill, the pure towers of the Cathedral of St. Elizabeth, the Rudheimers drinking to her health in Rhenish wine, sparkling in Bohemian glasses, Wilhemshöhe and its park where the fallen Napoleon III now walked, the bed with its white curtains knotted with a ribbon the colour of hope,— how far off all this was, how quickly it was fading away into the past! . . . They drew near to Amiens and skirted the citadel in which, at that very hour, Louis was working in his soldier's dress. They met vehicles full of arms and national guards exercising on the Chaussée Saint Pierre. . . . A crowd had gathered from the Hôtel de Ville to the Place Périgord. In the Rue des Rabuissons, alongside the Prefecture and the Musée, the cabriolet was obliged to go at walking

pace, so thick were the people. M. Ellangé gave a resigned look at the façades on which the eagles had formerly spread their wings. Applause and cries of *"Vive la République! Vive Gambetta!"* burst forth. An open carriage came out from the court-yard of the Prefecture. Arms were raised in the air, heads were uncovered and hats were waved. Stationary by the side of the causeway, M. Ellangé and Marthe gazed with emotion on the ardent serious face of the young Minister of the Interior, with his long hair and fiery eyes. . . . They imagined they were looking upon one of those heroic members of the convention who carried the soul of the nation to the armies. . . . And without reflecting they simultaneously rose to their feet, they communed with the soul of the democracy, they shouted with all the strength of their instinct:

"Vive Gambetta! Vive la France!"

PART III

VII

"How soon evening comes," sighed Mme. Ellangé. "We must light up already."

"Only four o'clock," said Marthe. "It will be pitch dark when father gets home."

They were at the end of November. That day, which was to be one of their last holidays, they had gone, after luncheon, to the cathedral, where the Most Holy Sacrament was on view in the Chapel of the Holy Heart. The whole town — the inactive middle-classes and the unemployed — was crowded there. A great religious impulse had united all classes, who had been drawn together by the imminence of the danger hanging over them. The Prussians were at their very doors.

With bowed heads, mother and daughter sat silently knitting woollen socks, without losing a second, like women working by the day. Every afternoon, until the last glimmer of light, they worked thus in the window-recess, and at the same time kept watch over the slumbering grandfather. He had changed enormously, had become so thin that Dr. Nichamy, powerless to reanimate the great worn-out body, half dead already, and the life of which was hourly diminishing, began to be

very anxious. The invalid's dry yellow hands rested on the white sheets. "The oil is descending," the doctor had said the day before, on leaving. "There's nothing to be done!" Nevertheless, from time to time the flame burnt more brightly. The ordinarily expressionless eyes lit up with a look of anger and despair. They avoided saying anything before him now. Every piece of bad news threw him into a feverish state; he tried to pronounce a few words, but only inarticulate sounds issued from his throat, and such a look of powerlessness and distress appeared in his eyes, that Marthe was unable to support the sight any longer and, to avoid crying out, left the room, weeping. . . . The most terrible blow had been the capitulation of Metz in the last days of October. They had learnt the news through the English newspapers on the 28th. Louis was taking luncheon at home that day. Without thinking of the Major, they had read the maddening despatches aloud in the adjoining room,— despatches announcing that Metz was in the possession of the Germans and that Bazaine, with 170,000 men, had been taken prisoner without fighting. . . . Painful, inexpressible stupor had overcome the old man, and since then he had not left his bed.

Everybody had felt this incomprehensible surrender of Metz as keenly as the Major. . . . After the great battles in one of which Jacques had fallen, after the catastrophe of Sedan, this disaster marked

the definite downfall; — all that remained of the first forces brought into the field had disappeared. People could not understand, after such long weeks of inaction, the silent disappearance of an army like that, including three marshals of France, sixty generals, 20,000 officers, 173,000 soldiers, 56 eagles, 622 field guns, 876 siege guns, 72 mitrailleuses, 260,000 rifles and a huge quantity of ammunition! . . . What a tragedy must have been enacted in the minds of those brave men when they found themselves condemned to inaction in the midst of famine and mud! And what punishment, cried Louis, was too great for the incapable and criminal chief who had allowed himself to be deluded by the dream of a restoration of which he would have been the artisan and the beneficiary, and who had stupidly allowed an admirable weapon to rust and break in his hand!

Whilst her mother was descending to the kitchen to see if the soup for the soldiers who were lodging with them would soon be ready, Marthe mused for a moment within the gathering darkness.

What a number of things had happened since their return from Pont-Noyelles six weeks ago! . . . One fact dominated everything: her definite refusal to leave Amiens, her sick grandfather and the other members of her family so long as the war lasted,— her decision to be confined far from Marburg and the old Rudheimers. . . . Otto's pressing letters — at first supplicatory, then couched

in peremptory terms — had run counter to her well-matured plan. . . . No, she would not abandon her mourning mother, bowed down by suffering and fatigue,— she would not abandon her only remaining brother at the moment of danger,— she would not abandon her native land when it was threatened. . . . In proportion as her gestation advanced and she approached near her time, a struggle every day more painful took place within her. . . . She evoked but with a feeling of uncertainty the still dear face of her husband, with its strong masculine features. . . . That was the Otto of the past, of the days of their fragile happiness! . . . That was the portrait which remained intact in the sanctuary of her memory. . . . But the other one, the new present-day Otto,— the Otto who was the incarnation of victory, she could summon up less clearly. Notwithstanding the kindness of his letters, he seemed to her to differ from the man he had been. Sometimes she thought of the time when they would meet again, the moment when she would once more see him. . . . How would she find him? It was not without a tinge of remorse, a painful embarrassment that she confessed her fears. Could it be possible that, on the eve of the long awaited day, the hour when their child was to be born, she was almost happy not to feel at her side the one to whom that dear little morsel of humanity owed its being? . . . It was the fruit of their love, the best of themselves, the prolongation of their youth!

. . . Who could have foretold so unbelievable an occurrence? The father would not be there to raise in his arms his little Hermann or his little Frida. . . . But perhaps, considering all that now separated them, it was better thus? . . . Poor dear Otto,— when would she see him again, and could she ever love him as much as before? . . . She confessed to herself how unjust it was to bear him a grudge, and yet she could not prevent feeling that the distance between them was growing greater, that the gulf was widening. . . . According to the most recent news she had received, Otto, after having proceeded to Paris with the Hessian division, to the ambulance of which he was attached, had been appointed as head of the medical service of the 3rd division of the reserve and sent to Metz. . . . Was he still there? Or was he following one of the two armies which, freed through the capitulation, had taken to the field again? . . . Was he descending with Prince Frederic Charles towards the Army of the Loire? Or was he ascending with Manteuffel towards Amiens and Rouen? . . . Marthe was tortured by that idea. Until then Otto had been but a part of an anonymous conqueror and invader; he was nowhere and everywhere. . . . Thus she had felt but an indefinite sorrow. . . . But her cup of bitterness would be filled to overflowing if, by an implacable fatality, he was one of those against whom — perhaps to-morrow — Louis would have to fight!

Mme. Ellangé quietly entered the room with the lamp. Marthe rose, closed the outside Venetian blinds and drew the curtains. The slightest movement caused her to feel tired, and in bending down she felt such a heaviness that she put her hands to her back, complaining.

"Take the stool," ordered her mother, "and stretch yourself out."

But Marthe shook her head, and seeing the Major's imploring eyes fixed upon her went to rearrange his pillows and kiss him on the forehead. . . . Ah! if he only knew!

If he only knew what a hurricane had swept over the lacerated country and their anguish-stricken hearts since the surrender of Metz! One by one the fortified towns had fallen. After Soissons and Schlestadt, the enemy had captured Neuf-Brisach, Verdun and Thionville. . . . Werder's troops had entered Dijon; the Bavarians, after beating La Motte-Rouge at Artenay, had occupied Orleans; a Prussian division had taken and burnt Châteaudun. . . . The black tide spread everywhere. In vain had Paris fought heroically at Bagneux, Châtillon and Bourget. . . . In vain had Gambetta and Freycinet, stimulating the electrified delegation at Tours, made army corps, by a series of decrees, rise from the earth. . . . In vain had Aurelle de Paladines gained the day at Coulmiers and, smiting the Bavarians, retaken Orleans! . . . Since then he had been cooling his heels there, whilst the three corps of

Alvensleben, Manstein and Voigt-Retz were rapidly arriving. . . . A bloody struggle was doubtless taking place there at that very hour, just the same as another one was going to be decided in their presence. . . . Marthe thought of the small number of combatants forming the army of the North,—80,000 men, people said,—who were face to face with Manteuffel and Von Goeben's powerful corps.

Organised by Farre, this army had first of all been confided to Bourbaki, after his departure from Metz and his journey to Hastings to see the Empress. But the former Commander in Chief of the Guard, demoralised, had but passed that way, and Gambetta having called him to another post, Farre, whilst waiting for the new chief, the Senegalese Faidherbe, to arrive, had just taken over the management of operations and massed three of his four brigades around Amiens. During the last two days the town had been swarming with soldiers, the streets had resounded with the noise of horses' hoofs and the rumbling of military carriages and pieces of artillery. The town was occupied by the Lecointe brigade; Bessol's brigade was drawn up from Corbie to Cachy; the Derroja brigade camped in the valleys of the Avre and the Hallue. It was in order to see to the accommodation of the staff of a regiment on the march, at Pont-Noyelles, that M. Ellangé had left that morning. . . . They were going to be used then, those intrenchments which, during October, had been hastily raised on the

southern front of the town: twelve semi-redoubts, connected by trenches. Five *campements de baraques,* each defended by 1,400 national guards, protected them. Marthe and her father had several times been to see the men at work there during the last five days. A feverish activity filled them then. Without thinking of the fatigue, Marthe devoted herself to relieving the poverty which was increasing all around them. The last factories had closed their doors. Commercial transactions had come to an end, and so had daily commerce, except what was absolutely indispensable. . . . Everybody had stopped work, and every hour, as the enemy drew nearer, confusion and excitement in the town had increased. These were now at their height; people lived in the midst of the emotion of the approaching battle; and, even in the silent house on the Boulevard du Mail, there was not one of the inhabitants but keenly felt its trepidation.

A feeling of oppression, due to this waiting for the storm to break, seemed to reign in the damp night air, which, in spite of the closed shutters and the drawn curtains, came in from the inky darkness and penetrated the very souls of those in the room. On entering, benumbed with cold, M. Ellangé seemed to bring the whole of the sinister night with him.

"Well?" asked Mme. Ellangé. "Have you housed them? You have done all that is necessary?"

Of a meddling disposition, she was secretly grieved to see her house thrown open without her being there, all the rooms occupied and the cellar placed at the soldiers' disposal. . . . For M. Ellangé had decided on the previous day to distribute the contents of the two last barrels of Beaune, bought that year, to the regulars of Derroja. . . . She almost regretted that they had not had the opening to the cellar walled up with old stones and blackened plaster, as they had done that of the subterranean passage where their silver plate and most valuable furniture were concealed. She had a keen taste for property and that egoism which, capable of great sacrifices, was reluctant to make small ones.

"Poor fellows!" said M. Ellangé, letting himself fall into an arm-chair. "If only you had seen them emptying their quarterns, you would not regret your Beaune. . . . How they did sing! . . . By the by, I've lodged a company of chasseurs in the barn."

"And supposing they set fire to it?"

"No danger of that! Do you know, good wife, it is a pleasure to rub shoulders with those jolly fellows. . . . This one had disparate weapons, was wretchedly equipped; that one didn't look with a very kindly eye on the officers. . . . Fugitives from Metz, eh? . . . But all the same they showed high spirits. They'll fight with all their heart. . . . Ah! how I regret that I am no longer young and have

never been good for anything but talking! I should have followed their example."

"Take care," whispered Marthe, indicating the old man. "You will awaken grandfather."

They turned their eyes towards the alcove. The Major's right eyelid was fluttering. So he was not asleep? . . . The shining pupil in that face of stone was then seen to turn! It sought for something on the wall and finally was fixed on a collection of arms between the windows. In the midst of pistols and fowling-pieces shone the sword which the Major had used at Jena, Waterloo and Champaubert.

"And I also should so much like to lend a hand, if I were able," was the paralytic's clear message.

The 24th, 25th and 26th dragged out in the midst of a long and mournful immobility. Waves of disquietude and hope came with the sound of engagements at the outposts. Incessant movements of troops announced the final preparations. The Lecointe brigade left Amiens to re-enforce the Bessol brigade; the Derroja brigade camped beyond Pont-Noyelles, towards Boves. Finally, all the national guards held themselves in readiness to occupy, at the first alarm, the line of advanced fortifications. . . . The noise of cannon, heard from time to time, found an echo in every heart. On Sunday the 27th, Marthe, although terribly tired, insisted on getting up and attending high mass. The horse was put

into the carriage, for she was incapable of walking to the cathedral.

When the barouche drew up at the foot of the flight of steps and Marthe Rudheimer raised her eyes, according to habit, to the massive façade, she became dizzy and had to lean on her mother's arm. Never had so strong an emotion seized her in the presence of the magnificent and sober architecture, the display of galleries, the immense rose-window between the towers,— that monument of human genius and Christian faith which, with its pillars and bell-turrets, aspired to heaven. She recalled the Cathedral of St. Elizabeth, raising to the sky, as though in supplication, its arms of stone,— she once more saw its altars, its stained-glass windows, its delicately carved columns, and the traces of the barbarous mutilations of the conqueror. She imagined the three naves as they were under the French occupation,— used as a storehouse for fodder; she remembered the shame she had then felt. But at the idea that perhaps in a few hours German bullets would strike the "Beau Dieu" of Amiens, that their stupid cannon balls would graze and shatter its marvellous statues, that the roofs of the cathedral, with their forest of beams, might burn like those of Strasburg, she was overwhelmed with anger and hatred. She had at first detested the war, on account of all the evils which it brought the two nations. She had an equal pity for all who sorrowed, under whatever flag they

might be. And then, had not France rushed blindly forward, carried away by her old bellicose spirit,—had she not been the provoker? . . . But hardly had Marthe experienced personal loss, than her feelings were modified, and little by little, as the whole truth was unfolded, she came to see things with other eyes. By all the defeats resulting from its confidence in the Emperor, and by Sedan, the conquered nation had been sufficiently punished for its pride and lack of foresight! . . . A second war, after the Ferrières interview, had begun,—a war declared this time by Germany and preached by her ministers, a war of race against race, a war of rapacious extermination and malignant ferocity, a war on their pockets and their lives. . . . Henceforth everything which was slumbering in the depths of the Frenchwoman's soul was awakened. The explosion was a sudden one, like that of a fire thought to be extinguished but which invisibly smoulders under the cinders, and then bursts forth violently. In contact with the earth and the dead, Marthe was once again the little inhabitant of Amiens whose clay had been kneaded and formed into shape by the traditions, customs and sky of Picardy. And instinctively, identifying in spite of herself this new war with those who were conducting it, she began, with all her being, to detest that Germany which she had so much loved and to extend her rancour to everything which bore its name.

A thought suddenly ravaged her heart,—Otto! A new being, an unknown one rose before her. He had the features of the old one, and yet so new an expression that she did not succeed in recognising him. She consulted her heart passionately. Did she love or did she hate that new Otto? Her doubt was so poignant that a veil of tears prevented her seeing. She pressed her mother's arm more tightly.

"Are you suffering?" inquired Mme. Ellangé, affectionately. "But I told you. . . . It was most imprudent!"

Marthe shook her head. No, she was not suffering in that way. And at the same moment her eyes fell on the load she was bearing, on her slow gait. . . . Then the consciousness of her helplessness crushed her. She was but a poor thing tossed about like a cork on the waves. The organ sent forth its droning appeal towards the vaulted roof. In the distance the forest of columns, the broad stone alley at the end of which, beyond the choir screen, stood the altar in all its golden glory were flooded with light from the tall stained-glass windows. The black and white pavement was crowded with people. The service had commenced.

Covered with their thick crape veils, Marthe and her mother proceeded to their seats in the front rows. Inquisitive eyes followed them as they passed, indicated the ex-Procurator General. Under the black veil which completely hid her face,

Marthe experienced, nevertheless, a sense of shame. How many people, she thought, must be saying: "There goes the German!" She seemed to hear the words and feel their lash. . . . Falling upon her knees in front of the prayer-stool, with her face in her hands, she began to weep in silence. Her sorrow floated upwards with the smoke of the incense and the sound of voices singing the *Kyrie*. Soon she would be a mother. . . . Up to that moment she had wished with all her heart that her child would be a daughter, a little Frida who would grow up in the quiet Marburg house, and in whom she would have loved to witness the reflowering of French grace, but with an added seriousness. . . . Now, however, and for the first time, she felt sad at the thought of the life she was about to give forth. . . . So deep was her distress that she momentarily regretted the maternity over which she had so much rejoiced. . . . She asked herself whether the little being whose eyes would soon open to the light of the world would not in his turn feel the effect of her wounds. German on his father's side, French on his mother's, from what difficulties would he not suffer? What mind would take the lead? What education — But at this point of her reflections a flood of light penetrated Marthe's soul. No, she could not, without being guilty of sacrilege, regret having obeyed the eternal law. Oh! that the Mother of God, with that sweet smile which illuminates her long face, and which Marthe had

so often admired at the Vierge Dorée front of the Cathedral, would pardon her! . . . A thrill of joy went through her; the child was turning. She stammered forth her prayer, as though it were a thanksgiving,— *Ave Maria, gratia plena.* . . . And with all the power of her will she wished that, instead of a daughter, she would have a son. Yes; a son! One after the other the voices of the two grandfathers came back to her memory. "We will call him Hermann!" said Herr Rudheimer, with a proud smile. "We will call him Jean Pierre!" proclaimed the Major, raising his little glass of kirsch. . . . Marthe concentrated her mind on her desire. . . . Yes, let it be a son,— a son who would resemble her, be of her lineage, continue the race,— an Ellangé, a real Ellangé!

When, at the prolonged tinkling of the bell and on the beadle tapping with his stick, all heads were raised, after the consecration of the host, Marthe, raising her veil, showed a serene face. Joyful song, mingled with the sound of the organ, burst forth from the bottom of the nave. Hope returned with a ray of sunlight which traversed the southern rose-window. A miraculous fiery rose was formed on the worn flag-stones of the transept,— a circle of trembling light: dark violet, mauve and scarlet. It was, as it were, a promise for the future. There had been a brief opening in the heavy, thunder-ladened clouds.

Unable to wait until the end of the mass, Marthe

hastily made for the door. She felt very unwell. When she issued on to the little square, the sun had again hidden itself. A distant rumbling was heard.

"Cannon!" murmured M. Ellangé. "In the direction of Villers-Bretonneux."

But Mme. Ellangé, listening, declared:

"No, in the direction of Dury. They are fighting all along the line."

They returned home in silence. Marthe's hands were icy cold. A cold perspiration broke out on her forehead.

"Whilst she is getting to bed," declared M. Ellangé, "I'll go fetch Nichamy."

Docilely, she let them do what they liked. She was shivering. Mme. Ellangé opened the bed and Julie hastily warmed it with a warming-pan.

"But what about grandfather?" inquired Marthe, anxiously. "Who will look after him?"

The old servant shook her white head until the strings of her cap danced again under her hairy chin.

"Make your mind easy about that," she said. "I can very well replace you. I got him to sleep not very long ago by singing to him as I used to do to you when you were little. Do you remember?

Pomme de reinette, pomme d'api,
Tapis, tapis rouge!
Pomme de reinette, pomme d'api
Tapis, tapis gris!

He's almost a child. . . . Ah! woe is our lot!"

With the very greatest care she assisted her little mistress to stretch herself out. "There now, are you all right like that?" she murmured, and at the same time she cast a tender yet blameful look on Marthe's huge waist,—on that rascally little fellow who at any other time would have been the sole thought and joyous hope of everybody but who, *ma foi,* made his appearance like vintage at Lent.

"It will take place either to-night or to-morrow," said Dr. Nichamy, pulling up the clothes under Marthe's chin.

Exhausted, he sat down for a few minutes and communicated his fears. The window-panes were constantly rattling through the incessant detonations, which formed a continuous and ever-increasing roar.

"They are in the midst of the battle," he sighed.

Dr. Nichamy went on to inform them that two days before General Farre, telegraphed for by the Prefect, who feared an immediate attack, had come to see that his plan of defending a stretch of 25 kilometres of territory, from Villers-Bretonneux to the Pont de Metz, was impossible with the forces at his disposal.

"We have not more than twenty-two thousand men, against double the number of Germans. . . . But what are we to do," Farre had replied to the Prefect. "I must defend Amiens; maintain, by guarding Corbie, the key of the Amiens to Arras railway, that is to say our line of retreat; and, in

addition, retain communication with Rouen and the rest of France."

Whereupon he had left to establish his headquarters at Corbie.

"It is very evident," concluded M. Ellangé, "that, barring a miracle, Amiens will to-morrow be in the hands of the enemy, and that afterwards Manteuffel will quickly move away to fight the Normandy troops and take Rouen."

Mme. Ellangé clasped her hands and exclaimed:

"But what about poor Louis at the citadel?"

Marthe imagined her brother on the bastion. Doubtless, tormented by every echo, he was meditating over and over again on the subject of his powerlessness. If the little army which protected the town, and to whose voice, in the midst of the discharge of musketry and the booming of artillery, she anxiously listened, should lose ground, Amiens would be trampled on, the Prussians would swarm into the undefended town and over the ridiculous walls behind which Louis chafed. Constructed in the eighteenth century, the fortress was of no help whatever,— a plaything, but the possession of which was indispensable to the occupants of the town. What could the feeble guns of Captain Vogel's little garrison do against the enemy's powerful batteries?

Dr. Nichamy left hurriedly, for his presence was necessary at the Hôtel de Ville, where he had organised the ambulance service: seven doctors, each with

two carriages, four nurses and some sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul at his disposal. The most trying hours were now beginning. People knew absolutely nothing, except that over there, on a line of villages which were taken and retaken, on a furiously disputed battlefield,— since the noise of the cannon neither moved away nor drew nearer,— Germans and French had been butchering each other since morning. About two o'clock M. Ellangé went to the Hôtel de Ville, in the hope of learning a few particulars. . . . On his way he met carts filled with wounded soldiers. Favourable news was afloat. The attack in the direction of Boves was said to have been repulsed. . . . Hope momentarily lit up every face. People who were entire strangers to each other shook hands. M. Ellangé was able to seize the excellent doctor between two doors, but, mopping his forehead and beaming with joy, he was unable to give other details. . . . Information varied from minute to minute. People stood at their doors and on the squares; accosted each other and asked questions. Ammunition waggons passed down the streets at a gallop, meeting breaks which proceeded at walking pace, jolting prostrate bodies. Darkness rapidly gathered. Groups of fleeing soldiers, black with powder, dust and dirt, were then seen to rush along; they had thrown away their rifles and were making discouraging remarks. Notwithstanding the fact that night had begun, M. Ellangé, still confident,

decided to climb with some friends, in search of news like himself, to the top of the highest tower of the cathedral. By the light of a candle, which fantastically illuminated the winding staircase, they reached the Galerie des Rois. With their backs to the rose-window, they scrutinised the already dark horizon, where large clouds of smoke were whirling round and round, with here and there red gleams. Fires, reddening the sinister sky, were springing up in the direction of Dury. The cannon no longer thundered except at intervals. Soon they ceased altogether, and this mournful silence, following, with the coming of night, on the day's tumult, appeared to be still more intolerable, redoubled the alarm. . . . What numbers of wounded men must be groaning on the frozen ground, amidst the thick mist! . . . However, on descending, they were able to exchange a few consoling words with an officer of the national guard, whose company had just returned to Amiens. . . . Nowhere had the enemy succeeded in breaking the line of battle. The army of the North camped victoriously on its positions.

M. Ellangé was in the act of proudly relating this result in Marthe's bedroom, where, during his absence, his wife had got everything ready in view of the great event. Marthe, with oppressed respiration, was faintly moaning. Suddenly old Julie rushed into the room to say that the Major was not going on at all well. He was continuously waving his valid arm, making an effort to speak, to ask for

something. . . . She knew not what. M. Ellangé ascended to his father's room, but soon came down. With childish ecstasy, the old man had listened to the news of the victory, as he would have done to a marvellous narrative, and immediately afterwards, calmed, had dozed off to sleep.

About ten o'clock in the evening, Marthe's pains increased, so M. Ellangé sent the coachman to inform Dr. Nichamy. The man came back with the reply that the doctor presented his excuses but he would come as soon as possible,— in an hour or two.

"I don't know what's happening," added the coachman in a low voice. "The Hôtel de Ville is all lit up. The doors are banging and the doctor's face is quite put out. They say that the army has been beaten and is about to abandon Amiens."

"Very good, Jean. Thank you."

Even M. Ellangé lost his self-control; depression followed so violently on hope that he dropped, with swinging arms, on to a stool at the foot of the bed. Marthe opened her eyes. Mme. Ellangé crossed herself, murmuring:

"God's will be done!"

Marthe gazed at them, understanding nothing. She was so entirely taken up with her trouble.

"What is the matter?" she asked at last. "Are we beaten?"

And without even distinguishing the meaning of the reply, the words of which fell upon her with-

out, as it were, reaching her ears, she recommenced her groans,— a woeful being in travail. She was, at that moment, nature in the act of creating life. A supreme insensibility to everything outside her lancinating pains came over her. What did it matter to her if a routed army was on the move around her, if hundreds of dead lay on the naked earth and the wounded shrieked in their agony? A single cry, that which came from her distorted mouth, covered everything. She was but a panting, heaving body with clenched fists on the mattress.

"What a time Dr. Nichamy is in coming," murmured Mme. Ellangé as, distracted, she walked from the bed to the window and anxiously looked out. She, usually so weak, the personification of effacement, became energetic and could find virile phrases with which to console her husband's distress. All his strength had left him. He remained motionless, helpless on his stool. His thoughts wandered from his dying father to the endangered lives of his son and daughter. God grant that Louis would not fall like Jacques under a Prussian bullet! God grant that Marthe would get over her trouble, that there would be no necessity to use the forceps — to protect her life! The idea of the possibility of an operation, of them having to choose between the child and the mother, flashed through his brain. The good man clenched his fists. If an existence was to be sacrificed, let it be that of the intruder; — let its weak breath be cut short rather than that of

the one who was panting there on the bed! . . . For a moment there hovered over the magistrate's austere soul, over that elevated mind which for forty years had demanded the application of justice and the repression of crime, a criminal desire,— the evil hope that his daughter's confinement would end badly, and that his grandson . . . no, no, not his grandson, the son of the conqueror, the stranger, the enemy. . . . But immediately his good sense returned, and passing his hands over his forehead, astonished, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Rising to his feet, he involuntarily looked in the mirror. A bitter smile hardened his glabrous face and tightly compressed lips. With a feeling of sad surprise, M. Ellangé scrutinised that face which he thought he knew so well and in the depths of which the suspicious phantom of another self was lurking,— that double which every one has within him, and which sometimes, in hours of stress and agitation, rises to the surface. He understood, at that moment, many of the psychological motives which had up to then escaped him, and of which he had been accustomed in his speeches for the prosecution to take so little account. . . . Man was but a poor thing! Truly, even the best were not worth much.

It was one o'clock in the morning when the doctor arrived. He threw his arms into the air.

"Ah! my friends. . . . Let us first of all look to the mother."

Having examined Marthe, he heaved a deep

breath. Good! Everything was going on all right. . . . Marthe clenched her teeth, to stifle her cries.

"Courage! fear nothing," said the doctor. "And shout as much as you like; it will relieve you."

He put on a big blouse, got ready — unobserved by his patient — his case of obstetric instruments; then, at last sitting down, unbuttoned his collar, which was choking him, and took a deep breath of air.

"There! On our left the Bessol and Lecointe brigades fought heroically. At Cachy, Gentilly and Villers-Bretonneux there were terrific struggles. Derroja defended his ground foot by foot at Saint Nicolas, Boves and Dury. But our troops are too weak in numbers and above all there is a lack of ammunition. A council of war has just been held at the Prefecture. With the exception of Paulze d'Ivoy, the generals are of the opinion that, without waiting any longer, they ought to retreat. They fear, considering the numerical superiority of the Prussians and the strength of their artillery that our batallions will be outflanked and scattered to-morrow. Better prevent a complete dissolution of these forces which have just proved their value, and thanks to which Faidherbe may soon be able to get together fresh bodies of troops! . . . Lardière has telegraphed to Farre. They are waiting for his reply before beginning the retreat. Meanwhile, it's Amiens who will have to pay the piper. . . .

We shall see Uhlan lances on the boulevard tomorrow."

A louder complaint than usual interrupted the doctor's discourse. Marthe looked at him with the eyes of an animal in distress, with such a pained expression that Nichamy, hardened though he was by such scenes, was moved. In this case the flesh was less torn than the soul. He drew near to the bed, then, turning towards M. Ellangé, said: —

"The moment is drawing near. You must leave us, my good friend. Courage!"

Overcoming his trouble, the father faintly smiled at his daughter and went out of the room with bowed shoulders. He lingered for a moment on the landing, but the cries came in such a painful succession that he could bear them no longer. In order to hear them less, without however ceasing to hear them, he descended to the dining-room, which was situated under Marthe's room. There he listened for the sound of voices and footsteps,— dull, hurried noises which, from time to time, were covered by piercing screams. Once more the strident cry sang out,— then dead silence reigned. With his heart throbbing, he sought to learn what that disquieting silence meant. He imagined that, immediately after the final moan, he had distinguished a feeble cry. . . . Confused thoughts mingled within him,— thoughts of death which had that day overcome so many, which, up there, in his own house, was completing its work, which was perhaps lying

in wait for Louis,— thoughts of that life which flourished amidst so many cases of mourning, that little uncertain voice, so heavy already with anxieties and troubles. . . . The injustice, confusion, mystery of these things filled him with unspeakable horror. A door opened and a voice — that of Mme. Ellangé — called to him softly.

"Lucien! You can come up now. It's a boy."

On entering, he perceived first of all but the rearranged bed and Marthe stretched out with colourless face and head lying on one side on the pillow. A look of infinite melancholy appeared on her wax-like features, at the corners of her drawn mouth, and on her lowered eyelids. He drew near. The eyes opened and looked out upon that household tragedy. No gleam of joy lit them up. The father and daughter looked at the little cradle over which Dr. Nichamy and the grandmother were leaning.

"He is enormous," said the doctor.

M. and Mme. Ellangé contemplated, with deep emotion, into which there entered more aversion than tenderness, the little red-faced man who was their grandson, and who resembled Otto alone. He had his square face, his nose and his red hair.

"The likeness is glaring," the Procurator could not help murmuring.

But his wife, seeing Marthe's anguish and the mute, bewildered look of inquiry with which she sought to learn their impression, corrected him:

"Do you know, Marthe, he's got your eyes!"

VIII

THE house was commencing to slumber in the pale dawn when the town was filled with detonations, cries and tumult. From five o'clock in the morning the retreat had begun all along the line. The army broke ground in four columns. Sinuous processions of men, horses and carriages wound slowly along the roads, or hurried through the thick fog, which clung to the soldiers' faces and their icy garments like a shroud. At three o'clock the Prefect had hastily left Amiens and transported the headquarters of the departmental administration to Abbeville, leaving the Mayor the work of disarming the national guard. On the order of this latter official the *mobilisés* had assembled on the Boulevard Fontaine. Many, having their guns — old muzzle-loaders — still charged, began to discharge them in the air before giving them up or throwing them aside. Immediately there was a panic and cries of, "Here come the Prussians!" All the soldiers remaining in the streets then made off at double quick step in the direction of the Doullens road, where the crowd had collected. In the midst of a deafening uproar, artillerymen and sailors rushed furiously hither and thither around the

citadel. Soldiers of the line and national guardsmen, so brave on the previous day, rid themselves of their knapsacks and weapons. The caissons crashed on to the pavements, whilst the gendarmes, whose duty it was to cover the rear, galloped, terror-stricken, amidst the ranks. Excited workmen wandered about in groups. The entire population, seized with madness, cried treason and shook its fist at the middle-classes and the priests "who had sold the town!" And amidst the sinister dawn disguised street arabs went through the town singing and dragging after them guns and sabres!

Awakened with a start, M. Ellangé, with his face at the window, listened with dismay to the rise and fall of this uproar. Little by little, as the day broke, calm returned. No movement yet announced that the enemy was near. Hastily dressing, he descended and, noiselessly closing the door of the silent house, went out into the street. He had not gone many yards before he learnt that bands of ruffians had profited by the *sauve-qui-peut* to break into the Cerisy barracks and pillage the warehouse in which the uniforms of the national guard were stored. They had made off, too, with all the merchandise on the platforms of the railway-station. Anxious about Louis, he continued on his way to the Hôtel de Ville, where a notice signed by the Mayor was posted up, announcing the departure of the generals and the Prefect. He heard there that Farre had left without giving any instructions to

the commander of the citadel. In accordance with an order from Paulze d'Ivoy, three companies of the national guard had taken up their quarters there. But what could they do with their wretched rifles? And what could be expected of the hundred and twenty improvised artillerymen of Louis' battery, with their twenty-two imperfect guns, scattered on the bastions, against the innumerable cannon of the conquerors of Metz? . . . It was rumoured that the Bishop had just made an ineffectual appeal to Captain Vogel not to resist. . . . Fine though heroism might be, M. Ellangé feared the consequences. . . . The match was far too unequal; it was sheer madness to think of running the risk. Thus reasoned the father, who took precedence of the patriot.

He returned home in despair. The entrance of the Prussians into the town,— that is to say, the attack on the citadel,— was but a question of hours. He wandered from one room to another, attempting to look cheerful. In Marthe's room, the sight of the child — the living portrait of Otto — was so painful to him that he could ill contain his distress. The fears of the two women mingled with his own to such an extent that the silence, after a time, became insupportable. Then, all words being useless, he ascended to his father's room, in order to hide the welling tears. The tranquillised Major had had from Julie a confirmation of the victory; the Prussians on the previous day had been crushed, had fled in disorder. The firing and shouts heard

during the morning were in celebration of the deliverance of Amiens. Raised up on cushions, the old man was eating a panado which the aged servant served out to him in spoonfuls with her trembling hand. He was as thin as a skeleton, his complexion was that of yellow wax, but in his immobile face, the muscles of the neck of which alone moved, every time he swallowed, his living eye sent forth a cheerful look.

Suddenly, about three o'clock, there was a ring at the bell and the street door was heard to open. A voice below called out: "Lucien!" It was the doctor. M. Ellangé came out on to the landing and, leaning with his elbows on the railings, enquired:

"Aren't you coming up?"

"No, if everything is going on all right with Marthe. I've no time. I'll return this evening."

"What is happening?"

"Don't you know? . . . Why, they're here. . . . They've summoned the Mayor to the Faubourg de Beauvais barricade. . . . At this very moment there's a squadron of blue hussars and infantry in front of the Hôtel de Ville — reconnoitring the citadel. . . . And the rest are coming. . . . Can't you hear? . . . They are passing within two hundred yards of St. Charles' Hospice."

A shrill muffled music and the cadenced sound of troops on the march could be distinctly heard in the

distance. . . . There was the dull roll of drums and above this deep bass the piping of fifes.

"It's the Barnekow division," uttered Dr. Nichamy. "The artillery is following. . . ."

On the floor below the door of Marthe's bedroom was ajar. Pale-faced Mme. Ellangé was listening there. . . . The doctor's voice filled the whole house, ascended with the mournful echo to the beds on which, with ears on the alert and their gaze fixed, lay the Major and Marthe. . . . Dr. Nichamy added:

"You'd better not see them! . . . Those Uhlans with carbines in their hands . . . and the batallions which follow one after the other with heavy step and in a line as though at the manœuvres. . . ."

His voice became tremulous:

"It is terrible!"

Then, the door having suddenly closed, all became quiet again. But it seemed to all of them that they could still hear, with the ironical whistling of the fifes and the mournful roll of the drums, the insulting music, which, as it were, danced and trampled on their hearts. . . . Inflexibly the marching past of the enemy continued, and above that heavy horror floated without end the triumphal air. They understood at that moment that all was over. With dry eyes they wept for their lost country. M. Ellangé, biting his lips until they bled, mechanically returned on Julie's heels to his father's room.

Throwing her arms into the air, the old woman exclaimed:

"Jesus!"

With an incomprehensible effort, the Major, as though attempting to flee from the horrible vision, had just turned himself round with his face to the wall. M. Ellangé rushed forward, and leaning over his father anxiously scrutinised the hard and sunken face,—those features which, about to disappear, had become dearer to him, incarnating, as they did, a long past, a multitude of recollections and their life in common. . . . Inexpressible sorrow had ravaged them, and in the old man's only eye, the life of which was about to depart, a look of stupor also mingled with the vitreous shadow of death. The Major was no more. He had died on awakening from his dream. He carried with him, mowed down at one stroke, the laurels of former times, the whole of his glorious vision of the magnificence of the Empire. Piously M. Ellangé closed his eye. Might he rest in peace with his faith! Old France passed away with him.

Whilst his wife and Julie were occupying themselves with the last toilet, M. Ellangé went out to make the double declaration: the death of Jean Pierre Ellangé and the birth of Hermann Jean Pierre Rudheimer. He returned immediately and buried himself in a corner of his room. Through having come into close proximity with the conquerors on the Place Périgord, through having seen

disciplined ranks of heavy Pomeranians, with China pipes between their hairy lips, laughingly trampling along the pavement, he had come back with such a feeling of humiliation and disgust that for a moment he had envied his father's end, his eternal sleep. At least he had ceased to suffer! What torments were reserved for those who were left! Who could count, even in this abyss of wretchedness, on having reached the bottom?

When Dr. Nichamy came in the evening, and, after having saluted the Major's remains, he had attended to his patient, the two men sat for a moment with Mme. Ellangé around the bed against which the cradle was standing. At the baby's first cry Marthe's motherly instinct had been awakened. She loved this little manikin with violet-coloured hands, miniature nails, large downy head, modelled on Otto's, and, when his eyes opened, their dark beauty, hurt by the light. She had expected to hate it and was astonished to find that she loved it immediately; she was even pained to see the aversion — disguised but still visible — which he inspired in his grandparents. They affected not to occupy themselves with him, and as though he had not been there they bustled about her alone. But though they did their best to keep their eyes from him, they were ever returning to the innocent one, accusing him, as though he had been the cause of their mourning, as though he alone had been the whole of Germany, the living symbol of defeat and invasion.

Whilst Marthe lay with closed eyes, the doctor related the events of the day. The Mayor had been pushed forward as though he had been a shield, whilst the Prussian scouts had reconnoitred the citadel. Vogel having given a point blank refusal to those who had come to parley with him, Dauphin had been conducted back to the Hôtel de Ville amidst the sly thrusts and insults of his escort. They were now occupied in piercing the houses beyond the Faubourg Saint Pierre and alongside the canal with loop-holes through which they could rain down bullets on the bastions. They would doubtless open fire early to-morrow morning. . . . Meanwhile the pleasures of the occupation were beginning.

"You must be ready to lodge and feed some of them. Nobody will escape that. We have succeeded to-day in finding accommodation for the greater part of them in the new portion of the Palais de Justice. But five thousand are announced! — infantry and artillery, dragoons and Uhlans. . . . Ah! my friend, I don't know which way to turn. . . . The wounded are arriving from all directions. The hospitals are full. They are establishing ambulances at the Seminary and the Museum."

He rose.

"I ought to have been far away already. I have to be everywhere at one and the same time. Here, at least, my mind is easy. The mother is in as good a state as possible. As to this little fellow"—

here he caressed the sleeping baby with his fat fingers which looked clumsy but were astonishingly soft—"all he asks to do is to live. Eh? . . . He's really a very nice baby!"

Pressing his old friend's hand, he added, gravely:

"One has departed, another has arrived. . . . Whither? Whence? That is a mystery."

Mme. Ellangé raised her eyes towards heaven, indicating, with a look of resignation, the unfathomable. They could do no more than bow before Him who governed all things and who had ordained this!

"My dear Lucien," said the doctor, "here you are a grandfather. . . . Come now, look at your wife, who sets us an example. Let us endeavour to draw from our minds the noble sentiments which inspire her faith! At times like this it is comforting to believe."

"But what are we to believe?" sighed Marthe, showing restlessness.

"What! aren't you asleep?"

"How can I sleep? . . . I should so much like to do so. But I find it impossible. I doze off for a moment but obsession ever torments me. My ideas are continually in conflict. . . . It is also in the name of God that the German armies do their duty and that Otto is our enemy! Another God who has his temples and pastors, and also presides over their victories!"

Herr Rudheimer's austere face was before her. She imagined she could hear his wrathful voice as

he stood in the pulpit at St. Elizabeth's. . . . Fragments of hymns rose from the depths of her memory. But she was no more able to accept, as an effect of celestial tenderness, the evils from which they had suffered,— the death of the Major and that of Jacques,— than she was able to admit that the God of the protestants sanctioned their bloody triumph: Sedan and Metz, France at the last extremity and Louis who on the morrow would be threatened by blind bullets. . . . With instinctive repulsion, she turned away from lutheran austerity, from that form of hypocrisy which she thought she detected in it. How could a religion claim to be impartial and just when it urged a nation to such ferocity, to such savage cruelty? . . . Disturbed in her faith, she felt a grudge against Otto's for being immovable, and against Otto himself for thinking and acting like all his own people, according to *his* faith. She would have liked to have been able, in imitation of her mother, to seize hold of some branch or other, to feel that she was touching the solid ground. Everything was sliding away beneath, within and around her. Everything was blood and darkness. . . .

At eleven o'clock in the morning, after a final fruitless summons, the Prussians opened fire on the citadel. The rifle shots could be heard on the Boulevard du Mail. The garrison kept up a smart fire in reply and bullets fell even on the Place Périgord and in the Rue des Jacobins. Every one

at the Ellangés' was filled with anguish. Oh! that Louis came out of it safe and sound! . . . Firing ceased in the afternoon, but they soon learnt that the respite held forth no hope. Manteuffel, the general in chief, had joined the commander of the 8th Corp, Von Goeben, at the Prefecture and decided to crush the weak fortress under his powerful batteries on the following day. Forty-four cannon were immediately transported across the Somme on a pontoon-bridge. Twenty-eight others were being placed in position on the heights of Saint Acheul and at the Grâce Farm. They would be ready to open fire at dawn.

Marthe spent that abominable day almost alone. Her father and mother relieved one another near the Major's body. M. Ellangé had himself pinned, with pious fingers, the cross of an officer of the Legion of Honour on the dead man's frock-coat. The gold enamelled star and the piece of scarlet ribbon evoked, on those remains and at that hour, the whole of the consoling past.

"It's the ribbon which he wore at Champaubert," said M. Ellangé to his daughter.

He had entered her room for a moment or two in order to occupy her attention whilst the carpenters were carrying up the double coffin. But, far from comforting Marthe, the idea of a departed glory made the present disaster merely the more bitter.

"Poor grandfather!" she sighed. "I shall not

even be able to kiss him before he is taken away. . . . What's that? . . . Oh! those noises!"

The staircase creaked under the heavy footsteps. Her cheek-bones were burning; her wrists and temples were throbbing with fever. It was the flow of milk which was agitating her, combined with the state of enervation into which she had been thrown since the morning by the volleys of musketry and the commotion in the house.

M. Ellangé avoided her eyes as he replied:

"Still the drawing-room furniture which your mother is finishing removing."

Since morning they had been carrying the silk upholstered arm-chairs and the Boule *bahuts* into the attic. They were clearing everything away in view of the dormitory for the Pomeranians. They had decided, as the drawing-room was the largest room and capable of accommodating six mattresses, to empty it. The spare rooms, those of Louis and poor Frida, would thus escape profanation. As to those in which Jacques and the Major had lived, they would henceforth remain closed, like tombs. Should they also be required to put up some officer or other, they would let him have the room which Otto and Marthe had occupied.

M. Ellangé gave these explanations in a nervous voice. But Marthe indicated by a gesture that she could not be deceived. . . . The footsteps were now to be heard pattering overhead. She could hear, however lightly they put it down, the placing of the

coffin on the trestles. The next moment Julie's apple-like, wrinkled face, with her fluted cap, appeared at the doorway to announce that:

"Monsieur is needed!"

"Go, father."

She could see the long pine-wood box and, surrounding it, the light-coloured varnished oak coffin with its silver handles. She saw for the last time the long bony body stretched out; she saw the lids being screwed down. . . . And at the same time she saw the decomposed body of her brother under a knoll in Lorraine. . . . She would have liked to have got up and fled! . . . She felt exasperated at being obliged to remain motionless, bleeding. Action would perhaps have alleviated, broken up her suffering. Whereas, stretched out thus, without being able to move, every sorrow, whether connected with family, town or country, came home to her; she was the quivering centre, the target which received every blow.

The funeral having been fixed for the afternoon of the morrow and no soldier having yet made his appearance, they were about to carry down the coffin into the drawing-room, where a *chapelle ardente* could be more conveniently arranged, when a brutal ring was heard at the door. After Julie had had time to parley in the vestibule with a quarter-master who held forth a billet of residence, the old woman, quite upset, came running to her employers.

"I can't make head or tail of his gibberish," she said. "You'll have to get Marthe to understand him."

M. Ellangé descended. A mask of icy dignity stiffened his sorrowful face. He advanced, through an instinctive return to former habits, with head erect and that rather theatrical walk which he had formerly affected when the usher with his silver chain had announced the arrival of the magistrates by the words: "La Cour!" . . . His pride awed the eight men who were standing below, joking, with their guns at rest and their knapsacks on their backs. They were fusileers of the 33rd Regiment and had come from the remotest part of eastern Prussia. Corpulent and red in their deep blue uniforms, with enormous pouches hanging from their belts, trousers tucked into their boots, and cloaks rolled up, they presented, under their pointed helmets, surly-looking faces. M. Ellangé was sickened by the smell of leather and damp cloth, perspiration and tobacco. He knew enough German to understand what the quarter-master wanted: mattresses and blankets, meat, potatoes, beer, brandy and cigars. . . . But emotion stifled him; he felt a desire to tell them in French all that his heart contained. This painful scene dragged on and ran the risk of becoming violent. A big red-headed fellow was grumbling and spitting on the ground between every two draws at his pipe. One of the soldiers then interposed. He explained that for three years

he had been an employé of the Northern Railway Co. at Abbeville.

"Ah!" thought the Procurator. "One of their spies. That's it!"

The man translated without intermission and without too marked an accent. His comrades and himself merely asked for the regulation rations, and taking a dirty notebook from the quarter-master's hands he read: "Per man, 750 grammes of bread, 500 grammes of meat or 250 of bacon, 500 grammes of potatoes with salt, 30 grammes of black coffee, 60 grammes of tobacco or five cigars, half a litre of wine or a litre of beer, and the twelfth part of a litre of brandy."

Come! Come! the conqueror had no intention of dying of hunger! Fuming, M. Ellangé opened the drawing-room door and indicated the beds. . . . As to the provisions, that was all right,— he would see that everything necessary was done. Then, profiting by the interpreter's good will, he called upon them to show respect for the dead, demanded silence and good behaviour. There was also in the house a young woman and a new-born child. The grandfather was about to say,—"the son of one of your own nationality, a doctor, an officer. . . ." But a feeling of shame made him hold back the words. . . . It was better to hide, as one would a vice, that cursed union. . . . As the ex-railwayman interpreted, the arrogant looks disappeared, and an air of commiseration softened the men's dark fea-

tures, tanned by the severe campaign. . . . "They made war but they were men!" said the quartermaster. Without replying, M. Ellangé ascended the stairs. This change of attitude irritated him still more; he preferred their recent rudeness. No, he had nothing in common with these barbarians. He hated them, recognised in them so many Ottos.

That night Marthe was unable to sleep. With high-strung nerves, she waited for the dawn to appear and the cannon to thunder. Through the closed doors, the noise of the squad, attending to its need and duties, could long be heard. Loud laughter and fragments of phrases in German sometimes resounded. On hearing the guttural syllables pronounced for the first time since she had ceased to speak with Otto she experienced a strange impression of surprise and sorrow. She felt a sort of repulsion on once more hearing the sound of the dear language, so profound and so beautiful, and to which she had become so accustomed that, four months before, she had framed her thoughts in it,—those words which had meant to her the revelation of love, the intimacy of home life, so many unforgettable joys. She could no longer appreciate its familiar cordiality. She continued to understand the sense, but, in these hostile months, even the sense became hostile. The "gibberish" which distracted old Julie and made the faces of her father and mother nervously twitch caused her positive physical suffering. . . . Not until dawn did she find sleep.

A silent morning rose on their weary slumbering. They awoke fearing to hear the sound of the bombardment. But no noise troubled the hours, except, downstairs, the moving to and fro of the Pomeranians, and, on the boulevard, the passing of fresh regiments, amidst the shrill sound of fifes. One after the other the bands struck up their victorious marches. . . . A general rode past accompanied by his escort. . . . When, in the midst of a silent and meditative procession, the very simple hearse which bore the Major started on its way, the streets were full of squads of soldiers knocking at the doors in search of lodgings. The majority of the shops were closed, and but for the numbers of blue, grey and green uniforms the sidewalks would have seemed empty and the town deserted. Not an inhabitant of Amiens showed his or her face. After the rapid service at Saint Rémy, M. Ellangé, whilst walking bareheaded behind the hearse to the Madeleine Cemetery, learnt from Dr. Nichamy that the citadel had surrendered during the morning without a fresh fight. On the previous day Captain Vogel had been wounded in the side by a bullet; he had fallen at the post of honour on the bastion he was defending and had died a few hours afterwards, at the close of the afternoon. Count Woirhaye, the oldest of the officers of the national guard, had succeeded him. . . . At midnight a *conseil de défense* had met. The guardsmen of the North refused point blank to continue so unequal a struggle, the artillerymen,

who would have liked to have fought until the last gasp, saw themselves forced to point their guns against their own homes. . . . The only thing to do was to give in. And so, with death in their souls, they had hoisted the white flag. Van Goeben had granted them the conditions of the capitulation of Sedan and that of Metz. The officers retained their arms and personal effects; the material of war and the supplies passed to the conqueror; the whole garrison became prisoners.

"And what are our losses?" asked M. Ellangé, with a rapidly beating heart.

"Four killed, including the brave Vogel," replied the doctor.

"And Louis?"

"Living!"

"Ah! . . . Then he is safe and sound?"

"They know nothing yet. The Prussian fire was very severe. There are a fairly large number of wounded."

M. Ellangé breathed again. Was Louis wounded? If that was their misfortune, they would nurse and cure him. . . . The essential thing was that he had escaped the only irreparable misfortune. . . . As to captivity, that did not last for ever!

In front of the citadel, where the procession had to turn to the left to reach the distant cemetery, Dr. Nichamy, continually hustled, made off. The wounded French soldiers had to be divided among

the other ambulances of the town and six hundred beds found from one day to another for the Musée Napoléon, where a large Prussian hospital was to be established.

Along the sad street of the faubourg, with its poor low houses, the funeral procession, much reduced in size, wended its way. M. Ellangé, uncertain as to Louis' fate, had decided that, awaiting the solemn obsequies at Pont-Noyelles, his father's body should be placed quite near at hand, at Amiens in a provisional tomb. Ten faithful friends followed to the cemetery the remains of the man who had travelled all over Europe, in the days when the golden eagles at the top of the flag staffs had flown from capital to capital. . . . M. Ellangé thought of his father's adventurous life. Twice had Jean Pierre Ellangé seen Emperors, Republics and Kings follow each other on French soil, but never, in the course of those three-quarters of a century, had the country fallen so low. One had to go back to the darkest days, those of the English royalty, to find a similar dismemberment. . . . No, never, not even when the Major had gone to plant and harvest coffee in the sun of Sao Paulo, whilst the English, Austrians and Russians were strutting about the Place de la Concorde, had the nation experienced such debasement! . . . Whence would salvation come? Would Paris hold out for long? Would Gambetta succeed in meeting Ducrot with the provincial armies? Would Trochu's plan be realised?

The problem was an insoluble one, or at any rate hidden in the uncertain future. . . . With dry eyes, M. Ellangé saw the heavy yellow coffin descend into the freshly dug grave. The *Curé* murmured his prayers. The grave-digger, according to custom, threw a few shovelfuls of earth into the grave. They resounded lugubriously. It was the definite *Requiescat,* the farewell of everything which the old man who lay there, with his glorious recollections, evoked. . . . It was also, for M. Ellangé, not only the bankruptcy of the régime under which he had grown up but the bankruptcy of the whole of his interior life,— his family life shattered by the death of his father and son, his *vie d'affection* for ever poisoned by Marthe's marriage. . . . Ah! Otto and little Hermann! . . . What sorrows were still going to complicate his distress? . . . Night had already fallen when he returned to the Boulevard du Mail.

"Things are not going at all well," Julie announced as she opened the door to him. "The little one is feverish."

Marthe, under the flow of milk, had become delirious. She imagined she could see Otto, whom she thrust aside, with the supplicating words, uttered in a broken voice:

"Tell those men to keep quiet. . . . Their voices hurt me. . . . Hermann cannot sleep . . . he is crying. . . . Everybody is crying because of them.

. . . Take them away, take them away immediately! . . ."

She did not calm down until very late, after her mother — worn out but still on her feet, mechanically courageous — had twenty times renewed the cold water bandages on her throbbing forehead. The announcement that the citadel had surrendered and that Louis was out of danger brought but an infinitely sad smile to her cracked lips. . . . She passed a bad night. . . . Dr. Nichamy appeared at an early hour and prescribed what was necessary. But what remedies were there which could relieve her mental suffering?

"Is anything known yet about Louis?" asked the father, a prey to a fixed idea, as he conducted the doctor to the door.

"Nothing. . . ."

The doctor evaded the question. On the threshold he inquired if M. Ellangé knew of the notice ordering that all firearms owned by the inhabitants must be handed over to the Prussian authorities? . . . Thus, they would have to part with the Major's old gun and pistols, Jacques and Louis' fowling-pieces! Did they really fear that vengeful hands would seize them and that a war of despair would begin?

"Meanwhile," added the doctor, "our money-chests are exhausted and I don't know how we're going to meet all our expenses. Yesterday we

needed twenty thousand francs a week to provide bread for all the unfortunates who are unemployed; to-day we shall require fifty thousand francs a day to feed this rapacious army. We are overwhelmed with requisitions. . . . We shall again be obliged to have recourse to borrowing."

"Amiens is wealthy and will recover," said M. Ellangé. "A financial wound is not a fatal one. . . ."

Already, at the end of October, a loan of two hundred thousand francs had been covered in a few days. He himself had subscribed for several thousands of francs. . . . What would he not give to shorten the occupation and put a stop to all the houses of France being converted, like his own, into German hostelries!

"And we're only at the beginning," exclaimed the doctor, pressing his hand. "We may have to pay another ransom to-morrow!"

"What other?"

"Hush! . . . It's not certain yet. I don't want to speak to you about it, in order not to give you too much joy."

"Tell me."

"Well, you'll perhaps see Louis again if he'll agree to serve no more until the end of the war. The mobilised soldiers who have been taken prisoners will be sent to Germany. But it may be that the artillerymen will be authorised to remain in Amiens on parole. In exchange the town must

pay a million within forty-eight hours. . . . Farewell. We shall see you at Vogel's funeral? Perhaps you'll be able to catch sight of Louis!"

Less anxious, M. Ellangé reascended to Marthe's room. . . . She listened to him and then reflected for a long time, whilst her mother was so overcome with pleasure that she had a difficulty in preventing herself from fainting. All she could say, as she burst into tears and slid down by the bed, was "Ah! mon Dieu!" Marthe then saw that her hair had changed from grey to pure white. She would have no more need to powder it to look old!

"Listen, father," said Marthe. "In order that Louis may be free, give all the money which you consider ought some day to belong to me. . . . I should like to contribute my share of the ransom. . . . I alone ought to find this sum. No more saintly use, indeed no other use could be found for that which later would come to me, and to which neither I nor my son have any right."

She reddened, ashamed. The idea that her fortune and that of Hermann might some day be increased by her share of the Major's heritage and the portion disposable through Jacques' death seemed odious to her. For the first time she thought of it with horror.

M. Ellangé, having again put on his black frock-coat to go to Saint-Leu, where the Bishop was to preside over the ceremony in honour of Captain Vogel, had to promise to return immediately with

news of Louis. He left the house at the same time as the Pomeranians, satiated and reposed, were leaving, with their thanks. They were going to join their regiment, assembled on the Esplanade. "It appears we're off in the direction of Rouen," said the ex-railwayman, and by way of farewell he made the military salute, in French fashion. Once the soldiers had left, the lonely house seemed to become almost cheerful again, they felt as though they could breathe.

Marthe, motionless in her narrow bed, under the heap of clothes which kept her in place, caressed with her right hand the face of her son. Hermann, blinking his eyes because of the strong light, vigorously sucked her thumb. She pulled it away from him but he obstinately plunged it into his mouth again. He ended by becoming red with anger and, puckering up his face, crying out for his sweet plaything. At that moment he resembled his grandfather, the pastor, more than his father. She contemplated with astonishment this being whom she had moulded out of her own flesh and blood, whom she was continuing to nourish with her milk, who, apart from the spark of life, owed everything to her, and who already displayed a whole foreign lineage, the instincts of unknown ancestors, a dark flame which was now smouldering, but would one day burst forth! . . . Was he her son? . . . Yes, and at the same time, but primarily, the son of Otto, of the

Rudheimers,— *their* son! . . . Yet she continued with her tender hand to stroke the child's warm satin-like skin, which gradually smoothed itself out. Cries gave place to chuckling; the pretty mouth became like a cherry. . . . She felt that she loved the innocent little fellow all the more ardently because of her parents' obscure dislike. His presence was a comfort to her, prevented her from feeling lonely. . . . Where was his father wandering at that hour? . . . Was he near, or far away? . . . She felt annoyed at herself for not being anxious over the absence of news. . . . But, through a singular contradiction, far from hoping that he would appear, she now dreaded seeing him again.

On hearing her father's voice she gave a start. He was ascending the staircase, relating to Mme. Ellangé and Julie that he had not been able to see Louis, who, slightly wounded in the arm, was being attended to at the ambulance. . . . The doctor who was in charge of it, and next to whom he had found himself in the church, had reassured him. . . . In a few days' time, if the million were guaranteed, the artillerymen would be liberated. Louis, brought in a carriage to the Boulevard du Mail, would be able to recover in their midst. . . . M. Ellangé went on to relate how imposing the funeral had been. It had been attended by General Von Goeben and his staff, the Mayor and the Municipal Council, and by all the officers of the citadel, provisionally set at liberty. Vogel

had been buried on the Saint-Pol bastion, at the very spot where he had fallen. And when his courage had been recalled by his companions-in-arms and by the Bishop, Von Goeben, turning towards his soldiers who were rendering military honours to the dead man, had praised, as was right, "the glorious end of a victim of duty."

Although it became more and more certain that they would see Louis again, the days which followed seemed very long to them. The doctor popped in to inform them that the Council had put its signature on ten bills of one hundred thousand francs each. Three councillors had left for Lille to negotiate them, whilst on the other hand the Mayor was going to try to raise the money on the spot. . . . In case they were doubly successful, they would then have a reserve.

"Put me down for fifty thousand francs," said M. Ellangé. "You shall have the money tonight."

And when Marthe murmured, "Father!" he stretched out his hand. "Let her touch no more on that subject. Let her cease tormenting herself!" . . . When they were again alone, he told her so firmly. In his joy at finding the son for whose life he had trembled, still intact,— that Louis who was now all the family, he inclined to pity his daughter, felt remorse at having, in spite of himself, wounded her feelings; and, to show that everything was forgotten, he bent over the cradle

to place, for the first time, a pardoning kiss upon the forehead of his grandson.

On December 5th, in the afternoon, Louis, with his arm in a sling, descended, aided by a nurse, from the barouche in which M. Ellangé had fetched him home. As he entered his sister's bedroom, Marthe, who had not been informed of the surprise that was in store for her, uttered a cry, and, half raising herself up, in spite of her mother's objurgations, long pressed her brother in her arms. He had grown thinner, his features were more virile and there was a sombre fire in his look. He then bent down and kissed his nephew, who, drooling, looked at him with serenity.

"Poor little chap!" he murmured. "I find that he resembles you."

Notwithstanding M. Ellangé who wanted to drag him away and Mme. Ellangé who was appearing every minute to say, "Louis, your bed is ready!" he refused to go to his room.

"All right! I'll come soon. But let me say a few words first! . . . Ah! Marthon, how pleased I am that you've gone back to your old room — the one you occupied when a girl! . . We shall be able to chatter to each other as we lie in bed. . . . All we've got to do is to open the door! . . . I thought of you all the time and how wretched you must be feeling. . . . Poor grandfather! . . . As to myself, the very devil was in me! . . . You should have seen Vogel amidst the bullets! . . . They

rained upon us like hail and he walked about amongst them with a smile on his face. . . . The *Canailles!* They were in ambush behind the *octroi* office, in advance of the Maulcreux fort, and shot at us from behind their shelter. . . . Vogel, in order to point the gun which I was using a little better, wanted to take aim in the embrasure. . . . Pat! a bullet struck him in the right side! . . . I received mine a minute later. I'm lucky, for it has only grazed the bone. . . ."

"Come now, Louis, you've done enough talking," ordered Mme. Ellangé.

"Ah! if I'd not been wounded I'd have done as our captain, Violette, did — refuse to give his parole! . . . I should have left with him. . . . Who knows but that I might have been able to escape and catch up with Faidherbe's army. . . . Ah! if every one had his own way! . . . War to the bitter end! We would succeed in our object! . . . We would drive them out in the end!"

He talked and talked, without noticing how he was hurting Marthe. He looked at her, quite pale and with his teeth clenched. He was about to murmur, "Pardon me!" when an authoritative ring was heard, the street door opened, and the sound of voices and steps came up the stairs. . . . Almost immediately Julie came running in, beside herself. . . .

"Madam! Madam!" she cried.

"What is the matter?" stammered Marthe, not yet guessing the truth.

M. and Mme. Ellangé instinctively rushed forward, as they would have done to meet a danger.

"What is it?"

Julie blinked.

"It's a German officer, with his orderly . . . a doctor."

A flash of light traversed Marthe's brain. She understood.

"Otto!"

Her cry was such a piercing one that Otto Rudheimer down below heard it and Hermann, suddenly awakened, became frightened and began to cry. . . . For a moment there was confusion.

"I implore you," moaned Marthe.

She pointed out the two men to her mother — M. Ellangé clenching his fists and Louis with suddenly flushed face — and, indicating the door of the adjoining room, exclaimed:

"Go in there! Quick! . . . I will call you soon."

Then, collecting all her strength together, she said to Julie, whose aged legs were giving way with excitement:

"Ask him to come up!"

IX

"You! It is you?"

Her little burning hands pressed his, heavy and brown. With an anxious smile, she looked upon the dear features she had found again,— upon the identical face of former days. His complexion was a little brighter, his beard rougher and longer, but in the depths of his eyes there was ever the same frank look of affection. . . . Seated at the bed's head, Otto replied to this look of ardent interrogation by another, no less profound. And both felt that this confrontation of their souls was a solemn, decisive one.

"Is it really you," said Marthe's silence, "you, my dear husband, whom I find again in this being whose appearance is unchanged, in spite of the dreadful uniform which you wear? . . . Without it, without this disguise which makes you similar to those I hate, it seems to me that you are still the same, the one whom I loved, and who, during these long, these abominable months, I had, in spite of myself, almost ceased to love. . . . For I never thought of you without picturing you as like those who killed my brother and grandfather, who have

invaded my native country, and who, awaiting the moment to dismember it, live upon it by murder and rapine. . . . But now that you are near me and that your looks pass tenderly from your son to me, I see that you are still the Otto whom I knew. . . . You are the first to suffer through everything which has separated us. . . . You pity and understand me."

And Otto's serious, anxious smile replied: "Poor dear little woman, sole source of my anxieties, how sorry I am to see you lying here so pale! . . . What dreary hours I have passed far from you! . . . How I shared your anguish and sorrow on hearing of Jacques' death! . . . A terrible fatality has weighed upon us, but such was the will of the Almighty, whose humble servants we ever are. . . . However, everything is not lost, since I see you alive and our little Hermann resting near you. . . . Have courage! — have confidence! — we shall still have happy days together!"

Otto rose and, leaning over Marthe's bed, again drew aside the muslin curtain which protected his sleeping son. The child, with its closed eyelids, bore such an astonishing resemblance to him that he was filled with a feeling of fierce pride. In spite of himself he rejoiced that Hermann distinctly belonged to the race of the conquerors and that the least French blood possible flowed in his veins. He by no means felt an aversion for the conquered and humiliated nation,— he had merely the

feeling that she was suffering the consequences of a just law, the punishment for her errors and lack of foresight. There was also a sweet and generous France,— the one of whom Marthe was the image. That exceptional France made up for the other. He called to mind the Exhibition of 1867, the mild evening filled with lights and the sound of music, the huge fête in which the modern Babylon was taking part.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

With that power of divination which the sufferer possesses, she detected an inimical intention,— she was already on the defence. . . . She had lived too many hours far from him, and, during those hours, too many things had passed between them, to prevent reflection coming after the primary transport of love. The past, however powerful and sweet it might have been, was not strong enough to replace for long the present.

Marthe placed her hand on Otto's shoulder. A feeling of repugnance came over her as her fingers touched the golden braid which indicated his rank and the sword whose knot lay upon the sheets.

"Sit down again near me. Speak!"

Her emotion had subsided after she had started up in bed, with her heart ready to burst, whilst Otto mounted the staircase and entered the room. . . . They had looked at each other for a moment, embarrassed; then, thrusting everything on one side, instinct had drawn them together. She had opened

her arms and without a word he had thrown himself into them. After a long embrace, he had kissed her on the forehead, then, walking round the bed, had drawn near to the cradle, had raised the kicking, crying infant high into the air. He had rocked him in his arms, murmuring sweet German words. The astonished Hermann had calmed down and soon, tickled by his father's thick beard, was laughing and drooling. Then Otto had stretched him out on his pillow, and, consoled, the warm little morsel of humanity had dropped off to sleep again. . . . This was their son,— the flesh of their flesh! This it was which had drawn them together, in the communion of the deepest human feeling. Such had been Marthe's feelings on once more seeing her husband, and that is why she was already troubled on perceiving that, hardly united again, a disagreement was arising, provoked by the very bond which brought them together.

But, determined to show herself superior to events, to remain worthy of the companion whom she had freely chosen, she clung to her fleeing tenderness, to intimate recollections, to everything which revived, exalted her husband's unexpected presence.

"What miracle has brought you here? How is it you did not tell me you were coming?"

"Didn't you receive my last letters?"

He replied in French, without appearing to be surprised that, since he was there, she had avoided

pronouncing a word in German. She felt grateful to him for his delicacy.

"None since . . . wait a moment!"

She began to think. So many, many things had happened during the last few weeks!

"Nothing for a month!"

"I wrote to you three times,—first of all from Metz, then from Rheims, and the last time when I got myself transferred from the medical service of the 3rd division of the reserve to the management of the large hospital at Amiens."

"You have been nominated here? You have come. . . ."

The sentence remained incomplete. . . . Was her surprise inspired by joy or trouble? Marthe herself could not answer the question. On seeing Otto, she had not reflected; she had supposed that he was following his division, that it was traversing the town, like the other troops, and that, passing near, he had merely come to kiss his wife and son. . . . She struck her forehead.

"Why, of course. You didn't even know about Hermann! . . . You know nothing! . . . It is terrible! . . . Oh! to have to live thus, in such days as these! . . . Each one going his own way! . . . We might die. . . . I might have been dead for a week past and you would only have learnt the truth to-day . . . So you don't know what has happened? . . . Haven't you heard about grandfather?"

The shadow of death obscured their faces. Marthe continued.

"Yes, it happened last Monday."

"How?"

Ah! yes, how? . . . She hesitated. Ideas filled her brain, ran counter to each other within her. . . . They were so contradictory that she was filled with trouble. But truth carried the day. She confessed, almost brutally.

"On the entry of your troops. That killed him!"

Immediately, on seeing Otto's expression become severer, she regretted her frankness. His wrinkled forehead and compressed lips said clearly: "How can I help it? That is the inevitable consequence of war!" He merely pretended to be sorry, because she had been hurt; at bottom he considered her unjust and was annoyed at her. . . . Repentant, she sought his hand, which he abandoned without rancour. She pressed it against her bosom. He displayed the egotistical gentleness of the conqueror rather than tender embarrassment. And yet he was intelligent and good.

"Can you feel how my heart is beating?" she asked.

Otto felt the pulsation of her life beneath his fingers. It sprang, with the red blood, from a generous source. And at the same time, through contact with that firm, sound bosom, a sweeter emotion filled him. Another source flowed there, that at

which Hermann's greedy lips drank. On feeling that existence, doubly his, palpitate under his powerful hand, Otto, overcome, ceased to be a victorious German, intoxicated with his rights and his strength. He became a husband and a father, an honest man. At once happy and unhappy, the companions of former times, the friend of to-day and to-morrow. He was filled with an infinite good will. The doctor saw clearly. Since the beginning of the war he had come into contact with and had relieved so many ills! He would know how not to envenom the invisible wound. Little by little the injured Marthe would grow calmer, her wounds would heal.

"Dear wife," he said, "let us try and love each other, without causing each other suffering. There are enough outside causes of irritation and trouble, enough dangers that menace our mutual agreement, so let us strive to think merely of that which draws us together. The evil days will pass. . . . Are you willing?"

She carried his powerful hand to her lips and kissed it tenderly.

"I am willing."

He rose and said:

"And now I should like to pay my respects to your father and mother. The idea has occurred to me that I may be able, during my sojourn here, to live near you. In this way I shall doubtless be the means of preventing a heavier burden being

placed on your house. Unless the entire army comes to Amiens, you will henceforth have to lodge only myself and my orderly."

"Ring," she said.

Old Julie's sullen face appeared in the half-open doorway. If thought had been capable of killing, her look would have stabbed Otto in the back as he was bending over the cradle in which Hermann was weeping and agitating his little arms. . . . But Otto rose, undisturbed, holding his son in his arms.

"He wants to feed," said Marthe. "Give him to me! . . . Julie, tell Monsieur and Madame that I am waiting to see them."

Whilst Louis was going to bed, as much in order to avoid seeing his brother-in-law as because he felt strangely tired and chilled, M. Ellangé, who had retired to his study, was having a violent scene with his wife. The suddenness of Otto's appearance, which was the very last thing he would have expected, had thrown him into a raging temper.

"Since this man doesn't possess the delicacy to understand that this is no place for him just now, I'll give him a bit of my mind."

"But, Lucien. . . ."

"There's no 'but' about it!"

In vain did Mme. Ellangé, in her tremulous voice, urge her son-in-law's rights. The Procurator, in the course of a desultory *réquisitoire,*[1] gave full vent

[1] A public prosecutor's speech, pressing a charge against a prisoner.— Translator.

to his hatred. He walked backwards and forwards, banged the table with his fist and overturned an arm-chair. The sight of her husband, usually so calm, in such a state of excitement as this made her cower with fear. She presented a sorry object with her black dress and her red eyes. She had come to the end of her powers of resistance. She could neither be of any help to her daughter nor of any support to her husband. She was overwhelmed by the prospect of a perpetual conflict. Not satisfied with having wrecked everything around them, war had now entered the house and would daily preside at their board.

"For Otto has doubtless come to live here," she moaned.

"That is the only thing lacking to complete our misery."

M. Ellangé saw their meals poisoned,— saw themselves condemned, as it were, to spend their days in gaol. Otto living amongst them was comparable to a carcan which holds a criminal in a pillory. A thousand times more cruel than the short stay of unknown soldiers, his presence in their conquered home would be an incessant, intolerable insult. Not satisfied with having taken their daughter, the Invader, the Murderer placed his foot upon their throats, crushing and defying them as long as he liked. . . .

Julie then appeared and delivered her message.

"Very good! Come along. . . ."

He hurried off in a determined mood. Mme. Ellangé followed, supplicating him.

"I implore you, Lucien, to restrain yourself."

"Let that pass!" he exclaimed.

But the invective which he was about to utter suddenly died on his lips when, from behind his wife, he saw the following touching picture in the semi-darkness of the room. Marthe, with uncovered bosom, was feeding her son. Instinctively the child had taken hold of the white, blue-veined breast with his little hands. With an arm around his swaddled body, she was smiling at him with that divine smile which Madonnas have. Her other hand pressed that of her husband, who looked down upon them with an expression of adoration. On seeing this M. Ellangé's anger subsided and gave place to a sorrowful and complex feeling. Could he unreservedly detest this Otto who loved Marthe so much? Under that hated uniform a pacific heart was beating. . . . M. Ellangé stopped, put out of countenance. . . . The Prussian before him vanished and became merely a man. Otto advanced and bowed with great dignity.

"I beg you to pardon me, Monsieur, for the painful surprise which I have caused you. I hear from Marthe that my last letters have miscarried. Had that not been so, my appearance here would not have been so sudden. Believe me, no one feels more than I do the sadness of the circumstances under which we again meet."

"Father," said Marthe, "Otto has come to Amiens to direct the ambulance at the Musée. If you have no objection he and his orderly will live here."

"In that way I shall be nearer my wife and you will no longer run the risk of being continually disturbed by soldiers with billets."

Taken unawares, M. Ellangé intimated his agreement by a nod. Under Otto's conciliatory attitude he could see but an impudent egoism, the free and easy behaviour of a conqueror. Touched by the attitude of Marthe and her son-in-law, happy to see the storm averted, Mme. Ellangé, after having timidly consulted her husband by means of a look, said in her weak voice:

"Your room is ready. Your man can carry up your luggage if he is there."

"Thank you. I will send him here to-night. Oh! I shan't be here very often. . . . Don't wait dinner for me. . . . And now, without delay, I must be off back to the hospital."

He added, not without nobleness, as he pulled at the skirts of his tunic, the collar of which had mounted too high:

"When, a short time ago, I entered those rooms of the Musée where formerly I experienced with Marthe so keen a pleasure, and saw them full of wounded soldiers, my return was, I swear to you, a melancholy one. . . . There are times when the duty of every one is disagreeable. . . ."

He waited for a moment, then, seeing by M. Ellangé's unsympathetic face that his advance would not be accepted, he begged them, by a motion of his hand, to be at their ease, and, picking up his flat cap from the chest of drawers, brought his heels together and saluted. Then, after kissing his wife and son, he walked out of the room, without affectation, with his head on high.

Henceforth a difficult life began in the Ellangé household. Otto showed perfect discretion and politeness in his relations with his parents-in-law. Pretending not to notice their involuntary repulsion,— for M. and Mme. Ellangé made an effort to be polite, he hardly appeared, ceaselessly occupied as he was by his absorbing duties. They avoided each other, exchanged but brief conversations, when they met by chance, between coming in and going out of a room. Their meals in common, which would have been painful, were, by a tacit agreement, suppressed. On the first day Otto had his luncheon at the hospital and in the evening ate with Marthe. The day afterwards, having come in late, he was served alone. M. and Mme. Ellangé, sadly seated opposite each other in the over large dining-room, had always finished dining by seven o'clock. As to Louis, in accordance with Dr. Nichamy's orders, he remained in bed. A short interview had brought the two brothers-in-law together. Commonplace phrases had been exchanged, but it soon became evident that an insuperable wall stood between them.

The varnish of civilisation cracked at the slightest word. They were no longer relatives, no longer a patient and a doctor, no longer men with acute and serious understandings, but irreducible adversaries, whose ideas, feelings and very flesh were in conflict. This secret violence was increased by the strength of their age. Both of them young and at the height of their vigour, they held themselves in with difficulty. Otto excused M. Ellangé's look of mute reproach because of his old age, but that in Louis' eyes was odious to him. . . . Henceforth he determined not to enter the young man's room, although on the occasion of his rapid visit he had found him in a rather unsatisfactory state. He contented himself with asking after him when he met his mother-in-law. She, in spite of her incurable regret at having lost her eldest son, did not feel the same irrational antipathy towards their guest. Mother-like, she was indulgent towards the man who had, at least, made her daughter happy; she was grateful to him for being full of attentions, for effacing himself in this manner in a house of mourning. Anxious about Louis, she also felt a superstitious respect for Otto's profession and reputed skill. The doctor! — that was what she called him when speaking about him, or when giving an order on his behalf. . . . Thus a parallel existence was established between them,— an existence in which, as each, through necessity, made concessions, appearances were saved.

Otto, after the first feeling of irritation caused by his parents-in-law's reception, immediately began to console himself. . . . He had arrived without the shadow of a mental reservation, naively happy at the thought of seeing his wife again. Deprived for a month of news of any sort, he had anxiously calculated the days and found that Marthe's confinement must be imminent, if it had not already taken place. He had earnestly hoped to be able to be present, to leave to no other person than himself the work of assisting Marthe and bringing his son into the world. For he had had not the slightest doubt on that score,— he would have a son, a fine little Hermann, a true German. He was glad that his eyes would open simultaneously with the birth of a new fatherland. Hermann would grow up with it, a child of United Germany. Born in the midst of the blood of war, he would benefit by a rich and glorious peace; it was for him that these great events were happening, that Destiny was being accomplished!

Tossed about in the train of armies and absorbed in his terribly fatiguing professional work, Otto had lived those stormy hours as though in a dream. The man had hardly time to think, so close was the doctor kept to his work. A surgeon at times, with upturned sleeves, he was the personification of will-power,— he had to feel no pity, to diagnose at a glance, to amputate, to sew up wounds, or else to dress them, both those of the flesh and those of the

soul. During the first part of the war, from Wissembourg to Sedan, he had hardly found a moment in which to rejoice over the victories which had been paid for with so much blood, or, anxiously, to think of the health of his wife and the ill effects which such shocks might have upon her. . . . At first he had felt exasperated, on seeing that she could not return to Marburg and that, had she been able to do so, she would only have unwillingly resumed her position as a Rudheimer, near the pastor and his wife. . . . Then, the war having continued, against his hope, after Sedan, he had rejoiced, since France's incredible obstinacy forced them to make a fresh appeal to arms and divine justice, that she had not left Amiens. Thus he would be able perhaps to draw near to her. . . . Cheerfully he had marched with the army on Paris and from the heights of Meudon had contemplated with joyful pride the great corrupt city, now within the grip of a circle of iron. . . . Ordered to Metz, he had sadly turned his footsteps towards the East. At last, learning that a small French army was being formed in the North, and that Manteuffel and Von Goeben's corps with the third division of the reserve were going to march against it, he had gaily set out again and had not rested, Amiens having been conquered during his sojourn at Rheims, until he was appointed to join the troops in occupation there. The protection of a friend at headquarters and the evidence of the services which he would be able to

render, thanks to his particular situation, in a large town which was the centre of operations, had immediately resulted in his appointment as doctor-in-chief of the hospital. . . . Along the roads crowded with convoys had he joyously trotted forward on his horse. . . . Dear little Marthe! With what serious ardour he had taken her in his arms! His love for her possessed a new shade: the good humour of the conqueror, a sort of ingenuous pride which took no heed of what the vanquished might feel but which, on the contrary, was flattered by such a possession. . . .

One evening, after dinner,— it was on the second day after Otto's arrival,— M. Ellangé, with an anxious look on his face, entered Marthe's room. The whole day he had been worrying over Louis' health. On changing the dressing, Dr. Nichamy had made a by no means reassuring face, and, indeed, the wound presented a very bad appearance. The arm was swollen up to the elbow and of burning hardness. Headache and fever were incessant. Surgical intervention would doubtless be necessary.

"You must ask Otto to look at it," said Marthe.

But M. Ellangé shrugged his shoulders. There were plenty of eminent surgeons in Amiens. His hatred against "Herr Rudheimer" had become more acute since the morning owing to the fresh catastrophes reported in the official despatches and the Abbeville newspapers.

"I haven't told you yet in order not to cause you

pain, for I suppose that the presence of your husband has not caused you to forget everything else."

"Oh! Father. . . ."

He unburdened his soul. Misfortunes came one after the other. France had just suffered two fresh defeats, at Paris and on the Loire. The capital had attempted a sortie, in the direction of the Marne. For three days Ducrot's army, attempting to break a way through, had heroically struggled on the plateaus of Villiers and Champigny with the Prince of Saxony's huge forces. Paris, after rushing forward with her head down, had again been driven back to her prison. At the same hour Prince Frederic Charles barred, at Loigny, the road by way of which D'Aurelle and Chanzy had set out to the assistance of the besieged. The army of the Loire, shattered at the first shock, had been crushed on the following days around Orleans and had had to evacuate the town. For the second time the Germans had entered it as masters. . . . The hope — cherished for a moment — of forming a junction had vanished.

"I don't want to be a bad prophet," added M. Ellangé, "but you must see, little one, that, with these two battles, we lose all chance now of success. . . . Paris is definitely cut off from the provinces. Our principal army no longer exists. . . . Rouen is also in the power of the Prussians, since the day before yesterday."

He listened.

"I can hear your husband's footstep. I do not wish to witness his joy."

He hurriedly knocked at Louis' door, which, almost always locked since Otto's arrival, was only opened during the hours that the doctor was at the Musée. It was then that the brother and sister, as they lay in bed, exchanged their brief conversations. Their fellowship was spoilt by the intervention of a third person in their thoughts, by his invisible presence. . . . They did not love each other any the less but they suffered through not being able to express their love unreservedly.

"Quick, my good wife!"

Mme. Ellangé, who was watching over her sleepless son, had just time to open and shut the door again. Otto was knocking. Marthe waited for a moment.

"Come in," she said at last, in an altered voice.

Otto appeared,— tired out. She searched his face for the reflection of his soul. She felt that she would have detested him had she found him cheerful. But, depressed by his anxieties and daily work, his only thought was of the delight of being able to breathe freely in an agreeable atmosphere. He embraced Marthe affectionately; then smiled at his son, who was sleeping.

"Take care, or you will wake him up with your beard," said Marthe.

Drawing one of the low arm-chairs near to the bed, he sat down, but not without having regarded

the pale blue silk upholstering with an air of censure. This was a very good example, he thought, of the expensive tastes, the luxury of the frivolous French nation! At Marburg the reclining arm-chair was covered with strong green reps.

"Thank goodness! How good it is to get back to you! . . . Poor Marburg! How far off it is! . . . Ah! When will this wretched war be over?"

She felt grateful to him for making no allusion to recent victories and frankly replied:

"But, Otto, doesn't that depend upon Prussia?"

He sought to read her thoughts.

"In what way?"

She suddenly regretted her words. On what a bloody, slippery ground had she not advanced? . . . She had already felt, on the previous day, that, apart from their family life,— the narrow pathway along which they might still walk together,— they were surrounded by sloughs and thorny bushes. . . . At the slightest deviation their ways would diverge and suddenly a precipice would yawn in front of them. She shook her head.

"No, I beg your pardon! We'd better not talk about that."

"Why not?"

"Don't you understand?"

"I must confess I don't."

Thus, placidly proud, surfeited by so many successes, and also firmly confident in the support of

his God, he did not even think that, on the evening of a double defeat, she would be sad! It never occurred to him that she must necessarily be cruelly suffering, and that, through a feeling of shame, it was repugnant to her to defend France in his presence.

"Very well!" she exclaimed, sharply, so much was the wound smarting. "Since you wish it, I will tell you."

She stopped short and reflected on the step she was taking. It was madness! But he, with his double superiority as a man and a conqueror, urged her on.

"You must speak, now."

"Well, I think that enough blood has now been spilt by the two armies, and that Prussia has conquered sufficient flags, guns, men and towns to enable her to show generosity and offer to make peace."

"But, my dear wife, Gambetta is so persuaded that by force of eloquence he will end in triumphing over Germany! . . . Your obstinate counsellors wouldn't accept peace if we offered it to them! . . . You may be certain that you alone now force us to make war!"

She looked at him, astounded. In the mouth of another person she would have thought that these words were uttered sarcastically. But Otto was sincere.

"What nation could accept the conditions which you offer without dishonour? So long as a valid man remains in France . . ."

She checked herself, frightened by the pitch of her own voice. With more sadness than astonishment, Otto looked at her. By her submission and tenderness, she had seemed up to then to be an integral part of himself. The love which he bore her, and which in the beginning had been troubled by Marthe's French frivolity (so did he style her romantic grace and fine sensibility),— that calm, serious love had long felt reassured. There entered into it a feeling of esteem for the really German qualities which Marthe had shown at Marburg: her intelligence, seriousness and devotion. There also entered into it a feeling of pleasure at the idea that henceforth he possessed a conquered place, that teutonic superiority had done its work, and that, moreover, it was inevitable and just! . . . But one had always to be on one's guard against this changeable France,— he ought to have expected it! And that is why he felt less surprised than hurt! . . . He did not yet bear a grudge against Marthe for misappreciating him, by misappreciating the virtues and rights of his race; but he suffered through her change of attitude, as he would have done had a friend betrayed him. Convinced of the rightfulness of his cause, he did not even think of explaining — even with the idea of excusing them — the reasons which persuaded Marthe that her point of view was

the right one. With a piercing look, she followed and read his thoughts. She showed no surprise when, in a morose tone, he said:

"Germany is only claiming German territory. I agree with you that it is sad her unity should be cemented with blood. But that is an inevitable law. Nothing is created without a struggle and without pain. . . . If you were not led away by your patriotism, you would recognise how moderate we are in our demands."

Tranquilly, he then began to explain, with respect to the appointment of German officials to the civil administration (the Commissary Sultzer replaced Lardière at the Prefecture), the way they were governing the country. Three general governments, those of Alsace, Lorraine and Rheims, ruled up to there the conquered territory; a fourth had just been established, that of Versailles, with which the departments of the Oise, the Seine Inférieure and the Somme were connected. And that was necessary, since the former government of the Empire no longer existed and the new one was not recognised by the people. So long as a Constituent Assembly had not chosen a new form of government, the Republic was but anarchy, and Prefect Sultzer had done quite right to abolish, in the name of the King of Prussia, the laws and decrees of the Government of the Defence as regards conscription and a universal levy of soldiers. . . .

With closed eyes, Marthe listened, but she did not

deign to reply. She felt, with astonishment, how different this man who was speaking with peaceful, authoritative voice was from the one she had loved before the war,— that good, intelligent, delicate Otto. Could it be that the one who gathered with her on the Werda road the *Elisabethenblümchen,* with which she had garnished the Delft flower-vase, the one who listened with rapturous air to the sonata in *re,* her companion in Italy, the *savant* who taught at the University the art of combating suffering and death, was this officer in a tight-fitting uniform, this arrogant German? Could it be that she had in front of her the tender husband of former times, the father of Hermann? . . . She questioned herself with horror, and at the same time she made certain that it was indeed the same man, and that he had ever been thus, without, until then, her having suspected it! What! — in a second she was carried a thousand leagues from him, a world separated them? . . . She did not reflect that, without her noticing she had been four months on the road which led her away from him,— four months of mourning and defeat. . . . Stupefied, she saw her change of view. A veil had been torn aside, and she perceived with horror that they had at one and the same time everything and nothing in common, that they were beings of another mentality, another blood, another race. . . . She was France, — humiliated, torn and bleeding. . . . He was heavy, arrogant Prussia!

Then, from the bottom of her soul, she hated him, suffering horribly in doing so. She also bore him ill-will, through one of those natural injustices of the heart, because she alone — the bruised and vanquished one — suffered, whilst he, without understanding, looked on, with his happy, irresponsible optimism.

A few days passed,— dark days, notwithstanding the pallid splendour of the snow. Winter had come in earnest,— the severe winter of the North. Amiens had put on its customary dress. A low, grey sky weighed down on the violet, storm-coloured roofs. The town was enveloped in fog. The hard ground rang with the incessant rumbling of hundreds of military vehicles. A multitude of waggons were drawn up on the Boulevard de l'Est. The streets were covered with glazed frost. For two days, under the windows of the Boulevard du Mail all the horses of the town — fat, thin, mettlesome, lame, a veritable procession of emaciated horseflesh — filed past on their way to the Place Longueville, where the Prussian veterinaries and officers passed them in review. People lived in a state of perpetual expectation but of what they knew not. Singular rumours were afloat. Napoleon III was reported to be dead. Some said he had succumbed to a hemorrhage; others that he had committed suicide by taking poison! . . . Movements of troops added to the agitation. The 4th and the 44th Pomeranians set out but returned with arms

and baggage. A cannon shot was fired at the citadel. Was it a signal? People whispered that Faidherbe's army, reorganised, had taken to the field again. Every one was seized with nervousness.

As her strength returned, Marthe felt her detachment, as regards Otto, increase. Her first feeling of aversion had lasted only until she had begun to reason. She saw that no one was guilty in this matter; that there were but victims. She felt that she must control her nerves; no tangible disagreement, no irreparable scene had taken place. . . . They still loved each other. . . . They could, they ought to continue to love each other! . . . Moreover, was not Hermann there, a narrow bond of union between their lives? . . . But the more she strove to bring about an accord, the more motives for discord did she find. Disagreement arose through the most futile causes,— a word, a look, a moment of silence. The war was between them. Thus, on the 13th,— when they heard the details of the Orleans rout, the 77 guns captured, the four armed steam-engines, the 10,000 prisoners,— the prospect of having to spend a whole evening together was so painful to Otto and Marthe that they separated after half an hour. Yet they had said nothing, save commonplace phrases. M. Ellangé followed the conflict with a keen eye. He would have done nothing to provoke it, but he rejoiced

that it had arisen. One of his most poignant regrets, among all those which tormented him, was the fact that he had not more formally opposed his daughter's marriage. To think that he had foreseen all this! But his foresight brought him no consolation. Marthe was indissolubly bound to her misfortune! . . . As to Mme. Ellangé, all her attention was centred on Louis, who was getting worse.

On the 14th Dr. Nichamy decided that a consultation was necessary. He would have liked to have called in his colleague of the Hôtel Dieu, Doyelles, but this celebrated surgeon had had to take to his bed the week before. . . . Otto, returning from the hospital, met his father-in-law and Dr. Nichamy at the very moment they were descending the staircase discussing what doctor they had better choose. Nichamy courteously replied to Otto's salutation, and turning round, said:

"But has M. Rudheimer seen Louis?"

"Not for some days."

"He might give us his opinion."

"With pleasure."

Dr. Nichamy retained, from the conversations which he had had with Otto during his previous visits, a high consideration for the knowledge and skill of the Privatdocent. Why not ask his advice? No one was better qualified to give it. . . . Thus thought the good, simple-hearted doctor, who could

not for the life of him understand why M. Ellangé gave him a furious nudge with his elbow as they were remounting the stairs.

Otto, after having amicably approached Louis, dexterously unrolled the bandage from his brother-in-law's arm. The terrible wound was revealed. Mortification was gaining ground, the arm was red up to the arm-pit and swelled out with hard ganglia.

"Well?" asked Mme. Ellangé, trembling as she saw Otto make a wry face.

"The bistoury will have to be used there, immediately."

"Exactly what I think," said Nichamy. "I'll go and fetch Lortal. I hope I shall find him at home."

Otto shook his head.

"Time presses. I can operate, if you are willing."

M. Ellangé, embarrassed, turned away his eyes. Louis, at once touched and indignant, hesitated. But there was such an air of authority and good nature in Otto's attitude that the mother supplicated her son to accept.

Louis gave way, with shame. Without appearing to notice anything, Otto had drawn from his pocket the little flat box in which he always carried his instruments, and asked for water, iodoform, lint and bandages. Then, looking at Louis in an amicable manner, he said:

"I'm going to hurt you. But you will be brave. Perhaps we shall be able to avoid amputation."

With clenched teeth and without a cry, Louis supported the painful operation. Otto cut away the flesh, scraped the bone. . . . Nichamy, with an apron over his big stomach, acted as assistant. Mme. Ellangé had had to leave the room. The father looked out of the window, silently suffering. When the operation was over and Otto had put in the last pin on the bandaged arm, Louis gave him a long look of thanks. . . .

"*Voilà!* we shall see to-morrow."

And without another word Otto discreetly left the room. The next day the fever had diminished, the mortification appeared to be stationary, and the arm-pit was less swollen.

"Your husband has been admirable," said Mme. Ellangé to Marthe in the evening.

She had not seen Otto the whole day. An interminable rain had washed the windows, softened the air. Marthe, with mind relaxed, gave herself up to the melancholy of the long grey hours. She had got up for the first time and remained on her feet for part of the afternoon. Exceedingly tired, she thought of her husband with less rancour, was grateful to him for the affectionate simplicity with which he had just acted; she found him again and at the same time once more became herself. Before dinner M. Ellangé came in very much excited. Strange rumours were afloat. Ham had been retaken from the Prussians by Faidherbe's army, which was approaching. His forces were said to

be considerable. The Prussians displayed restlessness. The officers had held a council of war at the Place Longueville. One hundred and sixteen requisition waggons, loaded with food and ammunition, had set off, doubtless to the assistance of Von Goeben or Manteuffel. . . . Did this mean deliverance? A sudden hope filled Marthe's heart.

It was eleven o'clock in the evening when Otto returned, but only for a few minutes, he said. He looked anxious, alleged that his work required him to get away quickly, which he did after kissing his son several times. They learnt from his orderly that the entire garrison of Amiens was preparing to depart. Naturally the ambulance doctors would remain, on account of the wounded. . . . As in the other houses of the town, the occupants of the house on the Boulevard du Mail slept not a wink. At four o'clock in the morning, for the first time since the occupation, the trumpet sound to saddle was heard. The beating of drums resounded during the closing hours of night. Regiments were crossing the town. When the dim dawn rose from amidst heavy clouds the entire Prussian army,— a brigade of infantry, two regiments of Uhlans, three batteries, and a company of pioneers,— was massed on the Place Longueville and the boulevards. M. Ellangé could see from his windows the bristling lances of the Uhlans, immobile on their heavy horses. An inexplicable delay occurred. At ten o'clock the cavalry had already descended twice.

But at half-past ten a tall ungainly fellow dressed as a peasant was conducted to the General and handed him a paper. It was no sooner read than everybody was in the saddle. Orders flew here and there; the troops were on the move.

On seeing them at last set off and their dark mass move towards the Saint Fuscien road, M. Ellangé was filled with inexpressible enthusiasm. When the horses of the last platoon of Uhlans had disappeared on the Boulevard Saint Charles he began to sing words devoid of any connection, and, rushing to Marthe and Louis, who were talking through their open door, exclaimed:

"They've gone! They've gone!"

People heard at noon that the citadel was still occupied. But so great was their relief to see the town free, so great was their hope that the coolest headed were seized with frenzy. With Faidherbe's army victory approached. Marthe laughed to herself. The black-winged vulture flew away from her heart. She impatiently waited for Otto's return; she forgot that she had hated him; she was eager to embrace him with all her old affection.

PART IV

X

"THERE'S no warmth in this fire!" moaned Marthe.

She threw into the fireplace a few more pine-cones, which immediately cracked and blazed up. Flames suddenly sprang from the blackened, smoking wood. All three stretched forth their numbed hands towards the dancing light. M. and Mme. Ellangé's sad faces were illuminated by the red reflection. Bent over the fire the father and mother gazed fixedly into the flames and thought of their troubles.

"Marthon!"

The call came from the bed, in a broken, distant voice.

"Turn up the lamp, will you, Marthon?" asked Louis. "It is going out."

But for the fire, whose flickering light was projected on to the ceiling and walls, the room would have been almost in darkness. The tall colza-oil lamp, standing on the bedside table, threw but a pale yellow circle of light around it. It was just sufficient to show the forlorn face of the invalid, whose impressive pallor formed a striking contrast

on the white pillow-case. On turning the key, Marthe lowered her eyes. She could no longer look without anguish upon those features which spoke of the sorrow of henceforth living mutilated, — neither upon the left arm stretched out on the sheets, nor, around the disarticulated shoulder, upon the bandaged stump. Four days before, on December 28th, the surgeon Doyelles, assisted by Dr. Nichamy, had amputated Louis' right arm. Otto's intervention had come too late and brought but a passing amelioration; the mortification had continued, and the terrible operation had, at last, to be performed.

Again did silence fall upon the little company, like a shroud. Each thought of his or her wretchedness. Never had they felt it so much as on that evening of January 1st, 1871. Once more, in imagination, they trod the bloody path which they had followed in the past year,— called to mind those six stormy months which had wrecked everything. Once more they emptied the bitter cup to the very dregs. And before them lay the black future, with its fresh ruins. One by one Marthe cast the resinous pine-cones into the fireplace. She had collected them under the pine-trees of Pont-Noyelles during the last fine days of the year. . . . Poor Pont-Noyelles, riddled with bullets, burnt down, only last week! The barn, where they stored the hay, and where, when a little girl, she had slept, with her hair full of stalks, on the sweet-scented

fodder, consisted of nothing but crumbling walls and a broken-in roof. . . . The entire house, with the exception of the left wing, where the library was situated, had been destroyed. Alas! Wherever her thoughts strayed they were buffeted and torn in pieces!

The three of them had hastily dined in the mournful dining-room. Their eyes had sought for the absent ones, had counted the empty places around the huge table. Frida, Jacques, the Major had departed! . . . Louis was upstairs consumed with sorrow. . . . Otto, finally, was absent, but M. and Mme. Ellangé were only too glad of that. . . . He was feasting at the Hôtel de Ville with the doctors of the corps of occupation and the various heads of departments. . . . Whilst hurrying through the meal, Marthe called to mind the protracted banquets of preceding years, those two "Firsts of January" spent with Herr and Frau Rudheimer, Otto and Frida in the warm little dining-room of the Burgerstrasse, at Marburg. The China stove softly roared. In the centre of the table, the mandarin oranges and the chocolates, wrapped in silver and tissue-paper, hung from the branches of the Christmas tree, which bristled with candles, like an evergreen thorn. Bottles of Johannisberg stretched out their slender necks under a venerable layer of dust. From time to time she took hold of Otto's hand and retained it. . . . Who would have predicted such a morrow as this? . . . She questioned her-

self. She could not say whether she preferred that her husband was far from her that evening, or whether she would have liked him to have been there, all the same. . . . She sighed; — she was better without him. Was not that logical? She there, with her own people, her real, only family, those of her race! . . . He outside, with his own people, the Germans, his real, only family, those of his race! . . . Loyally she had endeavoured to love him since his return, if not with the entire open-heartedness of former days at least with that grave tenderness which could still subsist in hearts and souls of their stamp. She had made allowance for the war. She had sacrificed the half of herself,— her susceptibilities, tastes and affections, which had been cut off, living, as with a hatchet. The mother who was born in her had assisted in the renunciation of her ideas as a mere woman; she came to see that, in the place of joys, there were duties in life. . . . At one time even she had thought that their existence together would still be possible, would reflower like one of those plants which, after being partly cut down, come to life again. . . . That was the time when she had seen Amiens delivered from the enemy, the streets rid of soldiers with pointed helmets, and when people had hoped that Faidherbe, with his reorganised army, would sweep Manteuffel before him. . . . The aspect of the struggle was changing. . . . Paris, freed from the North, was

breaking through the besieging forces. . . . Both Marthe and Louis believed that victory had returned, that France was saved. . . .

Days of enthusiasm! Amiens, in a state of feverish excitement, shook off its torpor. The shops reopened. The squares were black with groups of gesticulating people. They related that Von Goeben was about to be surrounded by French troops, which would afterwards easily get the better of the citadel. They were advancing along the road from Abbeville, Albert and Roye. Bodies of *mobiles*[1] occupied Largeau. They had been seen and spoken to. And people scoffed at Hubert, the commander of the little Prussian garrison, who had posted up a notice threatening to bombard the town at the first movement on the part of the inhabitants or on the first appearance of the French. In the excitement, some one had even fired from the Faubourg de Noyons on a Prussian patrol. Hubert demanded that the author of the outrage should be handed over to him, in addition to a fine of 20,000 francs, otherwise he would open fire. The indignant crowd murmured. Should he be so foolish as to carry out his threat, there could be no doubt that Faidherbe would put the entire garrison and the wounded to the sword! . . . Exasperated workmen were already talking about massacring the latter.

[1] Mobolized soldiers.— Translator.

Dr. Nichamy, on an order from the Mayor, had had big strips of paper bearing the words "*Honneur d'Amiens! Respect aux blessés!*" hastily pasted on the walls of all the ambulances, on the railings of the Musée and the Library. On the Friday and Saturday Otto had had to remain at the hospital, in such sort that Marthe, getting anxious, decided on the evening of the latter day to have the horse put into the barouche and to fetch him from the Rue des Rabuissons. She felt that she could not employ her first going out better. . . . When she saw him in the curator's room, which he had turned into an office, a burst of tenderness urged her towards him. He had so harassed, so solitary an air that she pitied him. He, in his turn, was experiencing the anguish of defeat, the uncertainty of fortune. . . . The rôles were reversed. Victorious, she no longer bore him ill-will. She became indulgent, saw Otto in another light. Although he affected a somewhat mocking serenity, Marthe could detect his anxiety at being isolated with his six hundred wounded, at the mercy of a hostile population. . . . She became quite naturally tender, almost coaxing. . . . She had not been able to persuade him to come to dine and sleep at the Boulevard du Mail, so, taking off her hat and cloak, she had kept him company for more than an hour. Together they had partaken of a collation, on a corner of his desk, cleared of his papers. . . . The future had a brighter look. She had imagined the invaders driven back to the fron-

tiers. Who could know,— perhaps, after so many trials, they would succeed in finding a little calm again, they would still be able to live side by side, not without a melancholy sweetness?

She rose to her feet, shivering.

"We are positively freezing!"

Mme. Ellangé consulted the thermometer, to find, however, that it registered 16 degrees Cent.[1] Although the hot-air stove was kept going at full tilt, it could not raise the temperature higher. The cold entered through the frozen window-panes, underneath the doors, through the damp, chilly walls. A thick layer of crackling snow lay, like a shroud, on the roofs and footpaths of the town.

"It is not astonishing," said M. Ellangé. "The thermometer registered eight degrees below zero[2] this morning."

Marthe returned with a shawl over her shoulders.

"We cannot complain, father, when we think of all the poor folk who have no fire."

"And of our soldiers, Marthe!" murmured Louis, "— the soldiers of Chanzy, Bourbaki, Ducrot and Faidherbe. . . ."

The armies in distress, with their thousands of pale phantoms, rose up before them. Scattered over France, the ragged regiments passed before their eyes, dragging their bleeding feet through the muddy snow or over the stony ground. Thousands

[1] 61° Fahr. [2] 18° Fahr.

lay prostrate around camp-fires. . . . They could hear their whistling respiration, the coughing of hollow chests. Bitterly, Marthe sat down again. How short her illusion had been! — how quickly the flag-stone had once more descended upon her! A few hours' enthusiasm and then the shells began to fall again. The Prussians of the citadel had said: "We're here!" From the top of the belfry all the roads were seen to be guarded by Uhlans. On Sunday afternoon they arrived, passing along the boulevard at a gallop, with their lances at rest; they were bringing back Prefect Sultzer to the Prefecture. At three o'clock the 3rd brigade of infantry, a regiment of cavalry and two batteries re-entered the town, preceded by a band. . . . The thing was done. The yoke had fallen upon their shoulders more heavily than ever, destroying all hope. Amiens saw its horizon contract, the day decline. Shops were closed and streets deserted. One moment more people had longed, waiting for the imminent battle. On Monday and Tuesday there had poured into the town heavy battalions dressed in Prussian blue, hussars with fur caps and light-coloured pelisses, iron-grey pioneers, gendarmes in green tunics and artillerymen dragging sinister-looking cannon over the paving-stones. Their yawning muzzles were arranged in rows in front of the bishop's palace. Pontonniers had filed past with their equipages. Innumerable horsemen and foot-soldiers continued to arrive from the South,—

a ceaseless flow, coming in in regular waves and with the powerful roar of a human tide. The whole of the 8th corps was there. In the evening the Ellangés had had to lodge ten fusileers of the 40th Hohenzollern. Otto had had to come downstairs to get them to moderate their noise. On the Wednesday, in accordance with the German custom when on the eve of a great fight, they had held a solemn service, which the army attended, not only at the Church of Saint Rémy, set apart since the occupation for the Protestant cult, but at the Cathedral and in all the churches of Amiens.

During those hours, which had been so painful that Marthe shuddered when she thought of them, she had come to see that her destiny and that of Otto had become irremediably disunited. Their love, after this hesitating flight, this last start, merely fluttered alone with broken wings. Otto's attitude became modified. Hurt, slighted, he regarded her with a persistent reproach, felt the bitterness of seeing her irresistibly move away. He did not complain, but he suffered, accusing her of inconstancy, when events alone, in changing, had changed her. Each day the distance between them grew greater.

At the end of the week,— Marthe would ever remember the day, the 23rd, for Louis had been operated upon in the morning,— the cannon, for the sound of which they had listened hour after hour, at last began to thunder. The battle had be-

gun all along the line of the Hallue, from Dauors to Bavelincourt. A pale sun shone in the icy air. M. Ellangé had watched the whole afternoon on the tower of the Cathedral. . . . The drama was enacted, with its invisible vicissitudes, on the grey horizon. Little clouds of white smoke above the dark line of the woods of Parmont indicated batteries in action. In reply to the sharp report of the Prussian cannon came the dull thunder of the naval guns; their detonations covered the continuous crackling of the musketry, which was now low, now distinct, recommencing in this place when it ceased in that. But at Pont-Noyelles it never ceased to rage. M. Ellangé, with his eyes filled with tears, evoked the old residence, broken open, the rooms sacked, the garden ploughed up. Evening had already come but he could not make up his mind to leave his observatory. Just as he was going to descend, firing had suddenly and furiously recommenced from one end of the valley to the other. Fires broke out here and there; villages blazed in the darkness of the night. In the centre, Pont-Noyelles was burning. . . . That red blaze, thought M. Ellangé, was their own homestead, it was the barn and the house, the family heritage disappearing in the midst of flames and smoke. A few days later they heard with what firmness Faidherbe's young troops held their ground. If, about four o'clock, the Prussians had ended in becoming masters of the villages on the banks of the river,

nowhere had they succeeded in setting their feet on the heights above the Hallue, and, in the evening, they had had to submit to so vigorous an attack that the Bessol, Derroja and Moulac divisions had momentarily entered all the places which they had had to abandon; driven back once more, they had not given up Pont-Noyelles without a fierce fight and had, at least, retained Bavelincourt. They had camped on their positions, after a struggle so hard that on the following day Manteuffel, giving up the idea of attacking them in front, began a turning movement. But Faidherbe, having proved his strength, had preferred to give up the fight. The rigorous night — there were 8 degrees [1] of frost and the men were without fires, without any other food than frozen bread — had been more redoubtable to his recruits than the day's murderous fight. Masking his retreat by a few volleys of shells and a movement of sharp-shooters, he had fallen back, in good order, in the direction of Arras. . . . Doubtless he would soon reappear.

Ah! that icy-cold night, when, whilst Louis was moaning in a feverish nightmare, they had heard the ceaseless rumbling of the carts which had set out in the morning, all the carts of the town, and which, in slow processions, returned with their loads of wounded! . . . Marthe had heard every hour strike, her mind filled with visions. There was Otto, in the large room of the Musée, struggling in

[1] Centigrade — i. e., 18° Fahr.

the midst of the lamentations of a bleeding crowd. . . . Another crowd, already stiff and with wide-open, glassy eyes, staring out into the darkness, she saw stretched among the hard ridges of snow. . . . She saw, also, the dry plum-trees, the old greengage plum-trees of Pont-Noyelles, with their branches shattered by bullets.

The next day and the day after regiments had poured into the town in a serried stream. Some of them had come, people said, even from Paris and Rouen. They filed past with an air of robustness and the heavy self-control of veterans. It was in vain that people shut themselves in so as not to see the swarms of pointed helmets, the cavalry flowing in like a stream, with the clatter of iron on the paving-stones, and the long procession of convoys. . . . The voices of Rhenish soldiers on the march rose from the boulevard in serious and joyous gusts. They passed along singing their hymns, and one after the other, through the closed window, Marthe distinguished words of old airs — *Heil dir im Siegerkrantz!* or else the canticle so many times sung at Marburg by her father-in-law: *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott!* . . . she began to hate this God who was not her own. A few hours before a lamentable column had passed over the same spot. Their hearts had been torn by the contrast. A thousand French prisoners, dropping with fatigue and with rage depicted on their faces, dragged themselves along between a few mounted guards,

with uplifted carbines. With pallid faces, clothes in rags and pierced shoes, light infantry-men, sailors, soldiers of the line, *mobiles* and peasants tramped along without a word and without a cry. Two officers were stretched in a carriage. What a desire came over Marthe to relieve the wretchedness of this human herd, ravaged by hunger and cold, and which was going to tramp along interminable roads towards distant fortresses! . . . She recollected how in December came the news of lost battles: in the West, Josnes, Villorceau, Tavers, where Chanzy, notwithstanding his heroism, had been unable to hold his ground, the retreat to Vendôme, then, after the Fréteval fight, the retreat to Le Mans,— ever retreat, in the midst of mud, drizzle and snow. . . . At Paris, there had been the second check at Bourget, the immense good will of the city crushed once more, and, since the 27th, the bombardment, amidst the acclamation of Germany, which scented the moment for devouring the quarry. . . . A hope still remained, a very vague one,— Bourbaki. . . . He was manœuvring in the East with a new army. . . . Yes, a dismal end, and the new year had opened still more mournfully!

Marthe gave a start. Her father had suddenly risen to his feet.

"It is bad to be dull in this way. We should become mad in the end if we always lived with our thoughts! . . . Take Montaigne, Marthe, and read

to us aloud, as you have done on other evenings."

For some days past they had sought in this way to escape from their sorrow.

"It won't fatigue Louis?" Mme. Ellangé asked.

"No! no!" exclaimed the invalid. "Read, Marthon. In that way I may be able to sleep . . . to sleep without dreaming."

Sleep! Every one of them desired its comforting quiet, the benefit of that annihilation into which, sometimes, by dint of being tired, they rolled and found forgetfulness.

M. Ellangé took from the mantelpiece the old volume with its clear-cut characters, and whose tree-calf binding, gilded and tooled, opened so well. Not long since,—in days of yore!—he had caressed its shining patina, that mysterious life which the past adds to inanimate things. . . . Little pleasures, long since dead! . . . He who loved so much to read! . . . But hardly had the page been begun than the phrases were lost in an indistinct murmur. His mind had set off again for the land of reality. Marthe however continued:

"'And then we others stupidly fear a sort of death, when we have already passed and will pass so many others. For not only, as Heraclitus says, the death of fire generates air and the death of air generates water. But still more clearly can we see in ourselves. The flower of age dies and passes when old age comes, and youth ends with manhood, childhood with youth, and the first age dies with

infancy. Yesterday dies to-day and to-day dies to-morrow. Nothing is ever durable.'"

She put down the book on her knees. M. Ellangé with bent head, was buried in thought. Her mother, standing near the bed, was turning down the wick of the lamp so that less light should fall on Louis. He had closed his eyes in sleep and was breathing more evenly. . . . Marthe meditated over the wisdom of Heraclitus and Montaigne, that perpetual death of feelings, beings and things of which existence is made up. . . . She repeated the words "Nothing is ever durable!" Thus she felt that there was some excuse for her having changed. She had obeyed a law of nature. . . . She sought for herself and could find herself no more. Where was the Marthe who existed before the war? Yet, would this rapid, complete separation of her being of yesterday from her being of to-day have been accomplished in this manner if the cataclysm had not overturned everything? . . . Loyal and tender, she had first of all felt regret, then remorse at detaching herself invincibly. . . . She was too just not to continue to render homage to Otto's qualities, his great intelligence, his somewhat rough kindness. . . . But this conclusion was an additional cause of suffering. Nothing, henceforth, would efface their deep, irreparable misunderstanding. They were proved to be different in everything, from that *façon d'être* which is connected with one's way of feeling and thinking, with the

formation of one's character, with the influence of education and one's surroundings, with the distinctive mark, in a word, of a society and a race, to that individual essence which forms the foundation of one's soul and flesh. The moral personality of her husband, as it appeared at present, in the brutal light of events, shocked her, wounded her in the tenderest spot of her sensibility; and even his physical part, to the familiarity of which she had, however, again become accustomed, though more through habit than through a revival of her former feelings, was beginning to be repugnant. . . .

She picked up the book which had slipped to the floor and opened it at hazard. . . . She marvelled. The lines which caught her eyes responded so well to her besetting thought. . . . Their son! What hereditary characteristics lay dormant within him, which blood would prevail? She read and reread, pondering over the words: "What monster is this,— this drop of sperm from which we are produced, which carries within it the impressions not merely of our bodily form but the thoughts and inclinations of our fathers? Where does this drop of water store this infinite number of forms? And how do they bear these resemblances, which are so temerarious and irregular in their progress that a grandson replies to his great-grandfather and a nephew to his uncle? . . ." For hours together, during her solitary nights and the long days when her husband was at the Musée, did she lean over

the cradle, scrutinising the little forehead, modelled on Otto's, where the atavic legacy slumbered. Would her child be a Rudheimer? That would be terrible! . . . Would he have the heavy instincts of a German, this grandson of the Ellangés, or would he bear, in the vivacity of his black eyes, a soul resembling that of his mother? Ardently she hoped that the paternal impress would be restricted to form of face and structure of body, and that a more generous, livelier blood would flow under the whiteness of his Germanic skin. . . . Was his name Hermann? Certainly not! It was Jean Pierre! . . . Thus did she passionately call him, even in Otto's presence. . . . She had come to regard the other Christian name, which the father alone used, with horror. . . . To the whole family the child was Jean Pierre. An Ellangé first of all. . . . By exercising patience and having faith, they would instil into this little fellow the tastes and habits of his country! Was he not doubly French, a true son of the soil of Amiens, by virtue of his native land and by the misfortunes of his country? . . .

On retiring for the night she locked her bedroom door. The idea that Otto, after having emptied innumerable tankards of beer and shouted a like number of "Hoch! hoch! hurrahs!" to the glory of Germany, might come and embrace her was odious. A feeling of disgust came over her at the imaginary contact of his thick beard, smelling of beer and tobacco. . . . She now avoided their long chats to-

gether, glad that his duties kept him, almost without cessation, at the hospital. He left at daybreak, always came in too late to be able to dine with her, and often even slept in his office on a camp bed which had been set up permanently there. He was not lacking in work. Red-cross carriages, loaded with wounded, were continually arriving. They filled at the ambulances the space which had been made through the departure for Prussia of the wounded or sick French prisoners, who had been despatched by train. The six hundred beds at the Musée were insufficient; the hospital for incurables, the other hospitals and the lycée being filled to overflowing, they were at their wits' end to know where to house the groaning batches of wounded soldiers. After Bapaume, Otto himself was so exhausted that he had to go to bed for two whole days.

It was then that Marthe learnt some of the surprises which their life together had in store for her. A feeling of irritation, without a cause, possessed her. The mere fact of entering Otto's room, with her son in her arms, of telling herself that this man was the master of their existences, and that some day she would have to follow him on to German territory filled her with the spirit of rebellion. She placed Jean Pierre upon the bed like a victim upon a sacrificial stone. She was tortured with jealousy when the little darling, raised in his father's arms, chuckled with delight. "You will be a little child of Marburg, a true Rudheimer!" Otto had said.

She was seized with a desire, on hearing these words, to snatch her son away and escape with him to some hidden corner, some cottage at Pont-Noyelles, since fire had consumed, with all the dear recollection of her childhood, the house of the past. . . . She was distracted at the idea of having, some day, to leave her family, to go back to live in Hesse, and to eternally hear the language of the conqueror around her. Otto detected the ardour with which she gloated over their son, watched for the moment to take him in her arms again.

Such a feeling as this revolted him much more than coldness. That he should have to bear, in the eyes of his wife, the weight of her resentment as a Frenchwoman, was already sufficiently iniquitous. But that she should also lay claim to Hermann, as a thing belonging to her alone, as a private property, that passed all bounds. He told her so, with a firmness the moderation of which exasperated her.

"I should certainly never have provoked this scene," she replied. "But you drive me to it. Well, I intend you to know what I think, now, since you already regard your son as a German — nothing but a German! . . . Your son! He is also mine, I suppose! . . . I shall give up none of my rights as a mother and a Frenchwoman. . . . I shall take my part in his education."

A deep wrinkle appeared on Otto's brow. There was a scornful ring in his voice.

"Must I remind you of what is inscribed in all codes? The woman takes the nationality of her husband. You are German, my dear Marthe;— don't forget that!"

She shook her head desperately.

"In name, perhaps."

"And in fact."

"Never! . . . Never have I felt myself so much a Frenchwoman,— a Frenchwoman in every fibre of my body."

He smiled, with a somewhat ironical courtesy.

"You are free to think so. Every one is master of his own feelings. . . . A man cannot think with the same sentimentality as a woman."

"Ah! how clearly one sees, at every word, the abyss which now separates us! . . . You regard the deepest and most sacred feeling as mere sentimentality, as a thing of no importance."

He stretched out his hand.

"I am unwell and harassed with worries. Such a discussion as this is both painful and useless. This is not the time for feelings but the time for acts. A great historical event is being accomplished about us. The German fatherland is being formed. It is necessary and just that we should submit to these evils for its sake."

"What does the German fatherland matter to me!"

"Marthe!"

"I know only one country,— France. . . . That

France which I was able to leave without regret when she lived in peace, glorious. . . . I thought then that I could live far away from her, and that where one was happy, there also was one's native country. . . . But to-day, when my country is conquered, torn and bleeding, I see my folly! . . . I was dreaming; I have awakened. . . . A Frenchwoman I was, a Frenchwoman I remain . . . and your son also, in spite of you, will be French!"

"Silence! I don't want to reply to you any more. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Sorrow leads you astray. . . . Do not let us envenom, by phrases which we may later regret, the wound we bear."

He pointed to Hermann, who, lying near him, resembled a doll. Good, he was looking in the direction of the daylight.

"Our child here is the future. He will be what you and I, by common accord, make him. . . . And perhaps he will console us!"

She reflected, analysing the character which she had loved in its entirety. She felt irritated at being forced to recognise in it, side by side with so many motives for hatred, so many reasons for esteem. . . . But having given voice to her suffering, she had calmed the acutest pangs. Taking up the child delicately, she placed it against her breast, and, avoiding Otto's limpid look, murmured: "Perhaps!" . . . Then, without turning her head, she left the room.

The most difficult days began. Winter had taken up its abode in the icy house. It was one of the severest winters that people had experienced for many years. They crowded around the meagre fires, the hot-air stove giving less and less heat. It was necessary to be economical with coal, which was running out. "Thirty-five francs the hectolitre!" [1] moaned old Julie. The cold penetrated to their very souls. Louis, who had at last risen from his bed, but so weak that he could not walk about without the aid of a stick, buried himself, with tightly closed mouth, in an arm-chair. They covered him up with bedclothes but he could not succeed in keeping warm.

"Are you comfortable?" asked Mme. Ellangé, anxiously.

His only reply was a faint smile. His silent grief contrasted with Marthe's loquacious despair. He appeared to be disinterested in what went on outside the walls of his room, whereas she lived in a state of feverish watchfulness for news and passionate comments,— a quivering spectatress of the formidable game which was drawing to an end, and echoes of which were brought by the English and Belgian newspapers, the German official despatches and the Abbeville journal.

First of all, there had been the bombardment of Péronne. Under the protection of the Kummer division, fifty-eight large cannon had poured, dur-

[1] One hundred litres, equal to 2.75 bushels.— Translator.

ing fifty-four hours, six hundred shots an hour on the little town. Suddenly, profiting by the fact that Manteuffel's attention was occupied with Normandy and that Von Goeben's troops, charged to look after the North, were dispersed over an extensive front, Faidherbe, who was reorganising his forces along the Scarpe, had made his appearance and driven the surprised Kummer as far as Bapaume. It had been a bloody success without any profitable result. The two armies left one hundred officers and three thousand men on the field. Faidherbe, husbanding his feeble forces, had then disappeared, without following up his attack, and Péronne, which had thought itself saved, saw that it would be captured and consequently capitulated.

In the West, the second army of the Loire, face to face with Prince Frederic Charles and Mecklenburg, lost the great battle of Mans, after a seven days' terrible struggle. The rout resulted in the loss of the town, twenty thousand prisoners, eighteen cannon and two flags. The disbanded troops reached Mayenne and Laval, to which Gambetta immediately rushed. The great minister and the tenacious hero of Auvours at once set to work. As on the Loire and the Huisne, Chanzy electrified his shadow of an army, slowly reorganised it for the last time. . . .

In the East, Bourbaki had attempted in vain to raise the blockade of Belfort. Victorious at Villersexel, he found Werder between himself and the

town, and was shattered on the Lizaine. After forty-eight hours' cannonading and attacking, the army of the East, with its lungs tired out, had retreated in disorder to Besançon.

Thus, on every scene of the war, the end was in view. The German tide submerged everything. Belfort and Bitche, isolated stone vessels, alone still held out. Everywhere else the three colours were lowered.

Gradually consumed by cold, hunger and misery, badly equipped and badly clothed, the armies of the Defence, which had so quickly sprung from the soil at Gambetta's ardent appeal, were one by one disintegrated. Powerless to break through the circle of fire in the centre of which Paris was expiring, they had been repelled to a distance, whilst, under a shower of shells, the capital, by means of its feverish crowd in arms, had stoically withstood the siege. Parisians were eating black bread, consumptively coughing as they stood in queue outside the butchers' shops, enraged with hope and useless bravery. In the letters brought by balloons, the great city uttered in vain its frenzied appeal to the tired provinces, expressed its wish to conquer or die. A feeling of lassitude, the consciousness that they were struggling to no purpose, disgust at the shedding of so much blood, at so many misfortunes, at so many ruins was everywhere on the increase.

"Armies cannot be improvised," said M. Ellangé to Louis one evening when his son had been praising

the immense effort made by the young Republic. "We've done enough now. Honour is more than safe. . . . I'm inclined to ask myself whether the men of the 4th of September are not merely trying to prolong their government by prolonging the war."

"Father, recollect Spain," replied Louis. "The will of a people sufficed to get the better of the conqueror of nations. Armies did not conquer Napoleon — the real one! — but a handful of partisans, peasants. . . . The Germans are as fatigued, disgusted and decimated as ourselves. . . . Look at the recruits of which the regiments we see passing are full! . . . Ask Otto's orderly. They all aspire to return home. Life is also hard where he lives, in Silesia; bread has doubled in price there. . . . If we would only continue. . . ."

He cast a bitter look at the stump of his amputated arm.

"If only those who could, would continue!"

M. Ellangé made a sceptical gesture.

"The French peasant is not the Spanish one. Jacques Bonhomme wants peace to enable him to cultivate his land, on which he lives."

"And the politicians of France also want peace,— that peace which will enable them — each fallen régime hopes so — to recover from the blow. But mark my words, father, if the nation recovers it will do so thanks to those men of the 4th of September."

"Why?"

"Because they have not lost all hope in her."

"Bravo, Louis!"

It was Dr. Nichamy who spoke, as he pushed open the dining-room door. Between a meeting of the ambulance committee and a visit to St. Charles' Hospital, he had come to see how his patient was progressing. A liberal Republican of long standing, the stout doctor was rather fond of poking fun at his friend, in whom he still saw the Imperial Procurator. But his good humour was only on the surface. Hardly had he sat down than he put himself in unison, pondered over the news of the afternoon and their eternal sorrow. However accustomed they might be to disasters, the last one surpassed them all.

"What!" he cried. "Don't you know? . . . I should have thought that M. Rudheimer. . . . Why, of course not, this is not the time for him to leave the hospital. Five hundred wounded Prussians have been announced for to-morrow."

"There'll never be too many," exclaimed Louis, savagely.

"And two thousand French prisoners. . . . It is reported that Faidherbe has just been crushed at Saint-Quentin, where he was attempting a diversion, with the object of raising the blockade of Paris. . . . He is said to have been driven back on Lille, with what remains of our poor army of the North! . . . That's the final blow!"

On the following day, January 23rd, Otto came in after luncheon to embrace his son, and brought Marthe a confirmation of the extent of the defeat. Von Goeben had taken 12,000 prisoners and six cannon. The army of the North no longer existed. That of Paris, attempting a final sortie on the same day, had not been able to get beyond Buzenval, and, driven back in disorder, had gone to increase the powerless crowd, which famine and bombardment would soon overthrow. As to the army of the East, taken between Werder and Manteuffel —

"Manteuffel?" she said. "Why, not very long ago, he was seen walking about on the Boulevard du Mail, smoking his cigar."

"He left on the 9th, having been appointed to the command of the Army of the South. At this moment he and Werder must have got Bourbaki like this. . . ." He bent two of his fingers to imitate the claws of a pair of pincers. "They have wedged him in at Besançon and separated him from France. If they don't crush him in their vice, they'll drive him to the Swiss frontier."

He had an air of arrogant satisfaction which revolted Marthe.

"And that is why," she said, looking him straight in the face, "you look so smiling?"

He filled the tall China bowl of his pipe,— a soldier's pipe bought at a Marburg tobacconist's, in the Rue des Trois-Cailloux, at Whitley's former mercery. The blackened enamel represented the

face of King William. Otto tranquilly lit up and blew out a few whiffs. A blue spiral of smoke rose through the lid, shaped like a crown. Giving a big laugh, he pointed to the royal emblem.

"No, this is the reason why!"

"What you say is perhaps very witty, but I don't understand."

"I can see that. . . . Here, *ma chère amie,* read this. . . . Since the 'tu' is out of fashion! . . . Read. . . . . And at the same time you will understand why we have conducted this war so severely."

She cast her eyes on the issue of the Berlin newspaper which related, in pompous terms, the ceremony celebrated on January 18th in the Galerie des Glaces, at the Palace of Versailles. . . . News of it had not yet reached Amiens. The shock was so great and the humiliation so painful that tears rose to Marthe's eyes and suddenly burst forth, drowning the dancing lines.

"Well, now you understand," said Otto, gravely. "His Majesty King William of Prussia has been crowned Emperor of Germany. The royal crown has been changed into an imperial one. I shall have to renew my pipe. . . . It also is out of fashion!"

Without a thought of the harm he was doing, so overflowing was he with enthusiasm and so great was his pride, Otto returned to Marthe, with a single dagger thrust which reached her soul, all the pin pricks she had inflicted on his love and self-

esteem. His delicacy as a man of spirit and his elevation as a man of science, all vanished in the enthusiasm of the patriot, intoxicated by victories and hardened by the terrible campaign. What did ruins matter, provided that the dream of a nation and of a century, German Unity, had at last been realised? They had fought *für Deutschland's Vertheidigung,* and the triumph surpassed all hopes. Whilst Marthe, drying her tears, was eagerly reading, Otto marvelled over the fabulous event. . . . That afternoon was an unforgettable date! They had celebrated divine service at an altar backed against the windows of the park. Surrounded by the flags of his guard, by generals and princes of his family, in the midst of the acclamations of all the Confederates, hereditary princes of Bavaria and Würtemberg, Grand-Dukes of Saxe-Weimar, Oldenburg, Baden, Coburg, princes and dukes of Hohenzollern, Holstein, etc., William had declared that he " consented, on their demand and that of the free towns, to attach the imperial dignity to the Crown of Prussia." Bismarck had then, in a calm voice, read the proclamation to the German people. Then, the Grand Duke of Baden having acclaimed William Emperor of Germany in the huge gallery, where emotion was at its height, a thunder of hurrahs had broke out, whilst the military bands played their hymns.

Without a word, Marthe handed the newspaper back to her husband. She imagined she could hear

the Galerie des Glaces, still full of the splendour of the *Grand Roi,* ringing with those terrible cheers. How well they had chosen the spot,— that Versailles which was the witness of so many glories, which had so long been the image and as it were the incarnation of the supremacy and genius of France. There, more than anywhere else, the boot of the conqueror caused injury. On that symbolical spot it had trampled on the very body of the vanquished nation.

"You have triumphed merely through our errors," she murmured at last. "You have been strong merely because of our weakness."

He stared at her without tenderness and replied, with religious gravity:

"If you have perished through your vices, we have triumphed because of our virtues. The Eternal Father alone ordained it!"

"Yes, *unser Gott,* our God!" she sneered. "That is to say your God,— the God of pillage, fire and murder!"

They stood face to face, with eyes full of hatred. Family, country, religion rose up between them, like fierce Eumenides. In the terrible disaster everything had crumbled to the ground: altars, native countries,— nothing remained! . . . With astonishment they contemplated the ruins.

XI

The next day, when accompanying from the Musée to the railway-station a convoy of two hundred Prussians, who, barely cured, had to make room for the wounded of Saint-Quentin, Otto reproached himself for his harshness towards Marthe. Certainly he could ill explain her new attitude, the complete detachment which she had manifested since her recovery. He recollected, as one recollects unmerited insults, the way she had recoiled from his slightest tendernesses,— her shrinking from a kiss on the neck, the withdrawal of her hand from his. He attributed these evident signs of indifference, nay, worse, of repugnance, to a passing state of excitement. But though cruelly mortified in his amorous egoism, he retained confidence and tried, in the meantime, to explain from a moral point of view his wife's *état d'âme*. . . . What would he have felt himself if the contrary had happened, if Germany, suffering a second Jena, had seen her territory invaded, conquered by French armies? . . . Doubtless he would have felt towards the victorious Marthe similar feelings to those which she had felt towards him? . . . Marthe, with flattered pride, and feeling no suffering from the

evils of which she had been the involuntary accomplice and the indirect cause, would without doubt have continued to love him. . . . Perhaps even, with her excessive sensibility, she would have tenderly sympathised with and consoled him. . . . He felt, at this vision, a movement of instinctive hostility. Most certainly, in such a situation as that, he would have been humiliated, would have suffered. . . . Was it astonishing that a woman, with her nerves out of order, the result of the emotion of her young motherhood, should feel, more profoundly perhaps than he himself would have done, a shock which certainly would have reached him? . . . This thought moved him, in his sense of justice. For if he was firmly convinced that justice alone had presided over the providential course of events, he did not entirely blind himself as regards the rest. Master of the hour, he inclined to kindness, which was facilitated by his ferociously personal but sincere affection, the recollection of recent happiness, and the touching pride of being a father. He made up his mind not to envenom the wound, to exercise the greatest care in touching it. It would heal up in the end!

Too late! . . . And even supposing he had been delicacy itself in his relations with Marthe, could she have done anything else than come to that extremity, the horror of which she was the first to bear: to cease to love the one with whom she had wished to make her life, with whom she had in her

turn engendered, created life? . . . Did not a necessity, an interest stronger than love compel her, henceforth, to see that being who had been everything to her — lover, husband and father, and who remained in certain respects so near her heart — with the odious features of a German with blood-stained hands, the murderer of her brother and grandfather? . . . Were they not both of them victims of an inevitable destiny? Was not that the fault of the war? Marthe asked herself that question at the time when she could still think with a little lucid equity. But this certainty merely added to her hatred. Who had desired the war and pursued it with rapacious obstinacy? . . . Otto had frankly confessed it,— Germany! — the whole of Germany, clinging to its object; the Empire!

Thus, instead of the crisis abating, everything increased it. During the end of January Marthe reached such a state of nervousness that she earnestly begged Otto not to come back to the Boulevard du Mail for a few days. The mere sight of his uniform, the sound of his steps, and, with still more reason, the constraint of his presence drove her mad. She would have been unable, had he been there, to restrain her violence. She begged him, in the name of dignity and interest, and if he still loved her, to consent to her request. Shrugging his shoulders, he had done so. All the four Ellangés had then lived those two weeks shut in their bolted house like wild beasts. Dr. Nichamy

was the only one to whom their door opened. They had heard, without being able to exhaust their distress, of the final blows which crushed France — now but a panting corpse — to the ground.

In the East, amidst the snow, Clinchant, succeeding Bourbaki who had attempted to commit suicide, had not been able to do more than guide his troops towards Swiss territory; — driven before Manteuffel the French soldiers had become veritable human herds, tramping along without shoes and without bread, shivering with fever and coughing! . . . Then Paris, whose admirable enthusiasm they had not known how to utilise, had come to the end of her resources and, falling the last of all, had thrown open her gates. The heart of the nation had ceased to beat. . . . The conditions were known later: Bismarck contented himself with 200 millions, plus the ceinture of forts and all the *matériel* of the gigantic army, with the exception of the rifles of the national guard which Favre and Trochu had not dared to disarm. . . . Twelve thousand soldiers of the active army were to remain organised to maintain order. The remainder, 240,000 men, were to be prisoners within the walls,— an apparent concession, remarked Louis, which spared the Germans the trouble and expense of transporting this mass of men to their fortresses and gaols. . . . How many prisoners crowded them already? Three, four hundred thousand perhaps.

" This time," M. Ellangé had said on the evening

on which they had heard of the conclusion of the armistice, "we have emptied the cup of shame to the very dregs."

A final discomfiture remained. On sending a notification of the armistice to Bordeaux, Favre omitted to inform Gambetta that it did not come into force for three days, and whilst Chanzy, Garibaldi and Faidherbe were everywhere laying down their arms, Von Goeben, Frederic Charles and Manteuffel were pushing ahead. In this way Abbeville, half the Yonne, the Loiret, the Loir-et-Cher and the Indre, a part of the Morvan, the Jura and the Côte-d'Or became German without a shot being fired and went to increase the booty. This posthumous haul made Marthe tremble with anger and disgust. She sank into her despair as into a pool of black water. She lost her foothold, slipped, a buzzing in her ears and with a sensation of asphyxiation.

During the whole of the first week of February she refused to leave her room and descend to the dining-room. She kept her son tightly pressed against her and both began to lose strength. The milk she gave him was poor and almost exhausted. They had to have recourse to pap and begin to wean him. . . . At last, however, on the supplications of her mother, she consented to eat more and reappear. But she lived within herself, without hardly ever speaking or smiling. The great silence which followed on the incessant booming of cannon, on the

sound of distant battles, surprised her. She suffered from this torpor, henceforth without news, and more perhaps than formerly, when excitedly waiting. She was prostrated by a feeling of immense depression, by the consciousness of irremediable defeat. She could not succeed in interesting herself in anything. She listened with inattentive ear to her father and Louis discussing the events of the week. . . . The delegation at Bordeaux protested against the acts of the government of Paris. . . . Gambetta, surprised by the armistice as by a thunderbolt, was resisting already, wished to make sure of elections from which the continuation of the war might spring. . . . Anything rather than a degrading peace! . . . Louis approved of this. . . . M. Ellangé, on the other hand, was indignant at his last decree, which excluded the high officials of the fallen régime from the future Assembly. . . . Fortunately this *fou furieux,* as M. Thiers styled him, had ended by resigning.

"I shall vote for peace," M. Ellangé concluded, energetically. "The longer we delay, the heavier the conditions will be."

"I shall vote for the Republican list!" resumed Louis. "War alone can obtain for us a less cruel treaty. . . . I cannot resign myself to seeing the representatives of France themselves subscribing to the mutilation of the fatherland!"

"Then it will be not only Alsace and Lorraine we shall lose. We had better give way to-day. . . .

Later, when we have become strong again, we will take our revenge."

"Later!" murmured Louis. "Later!"

And Marthe evoked a continuation of the war,—a future when her son, in his turn, would go through his military exercises, wearing a heavy blue cloak and a pointed helmet. . . . She imagined Jean Pierre in the service of Germany, crossing the frontier and fighting against Louis' son. . . . No, rather than this sacrilege, a thousand times rather let them have war now, war to the bitter end, with the whole country, seizing scythes and guns, crouched behind hedges and entrenched in the mountains! . . . Let the decimated enemy be seized with fear and give way! . . . Let France, at last, wake up!

Otto had been back for some days and made himself as little obtrusive as possible. However, anxious about the health of his son and that of Marthe, he would have liked her to have gone out, to get a change of air and strengthen herself. . . . But where was she to go? Pont-Noyelles was uninhabitable. He proposed the south of France, the shores of the Lake of Geneva. . . . Why not Marburg? . . . But she shook her head, refused to move, at any rate for the moment. She no longer felt towards Otto that absurd antagonism, the intermittent violence of which became attenuated when she once more perceived his former character under his present bearing, but a sad and icy repulsion. He

affected to be unconcerned by it, but was much more anxious at bottom than he showed on the surface. He had insisted on the resumption of their normal existence, at any rate in appearance. Henceforth, as formerly, the whole family met at the evening meal. Peace was about to be signed; it was time they became reasonable beings again! . . . Marthe and her parents had acquiesced, with disdainful coldness. A deep feeling of anger accumulated within him, a feeling of rage at the idea of being scoffed at by his little wife, who, as a woman and a Frenchwoman, was doubly inferior to him. He intended, when the right time came, to exercise all his rights, but until then wished to avoid any fresh scene, unworthy of them. But though he retarded the breaking of the storm, they breathed an air which was saturated with it. Everything became a pretext for coming to a complete, if not a definite explanation. Only the spark was needed to set fire to the powder magazine, and this quickly sprang forth. . . . The first meetings of the National Assembly, which met at Bordeaux on February 21st, had filled the dining-room, where dinner after dinner had been eaten in silence, with their feverish echo. In the end, Otto having spoken the first words, conversations had begun. They had first of all tacked about as though in the midst of an archipelago, had passed from one phrase to another. Louis retained a feeling of gratitude towards the doctor for the simple devotion with which he had

attended to him. M. Ellangé, without revealing anything of his trouble, made a point of being courteous, as he would have done in the case of any other guest, in ordinary times. He recognised, moreover, his son-in-law's real intellectual value. As to Mme. Ellangé, she recovered her taste for household matters, returned little by little to her humble duties. All three habituated themselves again, much more easily than they would have believed, to rubbing shoulders with Otto. Marthe alone retained a mournful silence.

On the afternoon of March 3rd they had heard the details of the events of the first of the month, the most touching day perhaps since Sedan. Whilst, after a solemn review held at Longchamp by the new Emperor, thirty thousand Germans, delegated by the victorious armies, entered Paris,— whilst the unfurled flags of Germany were passing, amidst the shrill and dull music of those drums and fifes which had killed Marthe's grandfather, the Assembly at Bordeaux voted, with a sort of precipitous shame, the ratification of the preliminaries of peace.

"The most painful treaty in our history," Louis exclaimed, indignantly; "and concluded in order to be able to pass more quickly to the question which occupies their thoughts,— what master to choose? In what sauce shall the remains — France! — be dressed!"

"You are carried away by political passion."

"Come now, father. . . . They voted urgency, without even listening to details regarding the ceded territories. . . . They covered the protests of patriots with cries. . . . In vain did the deputies of Alsace and Lorraine send forth the appeal of the two provinces, their cry for help! . . . The majority had made up its mind. . . . There were but one hundred and seven brave men to rally around Gambetta and Chanzy."

"There were five hundred and forty-six wise men. . . . To continue the struggle under present conditions is madness . . . the country can do no more."

"It doesn't want to do any more, father. When you want to do a thing you can do it."

"The will to do a thing cannot be improvised, my boy. . . . No more than you can give a nation, in a day, a whole military and civic education. That takes a generation or two. It is to the honour of Gambetta, as you say, that at least he fought for honour. But it is not sufficient for a country and its armies to fight bravely and know how to die, it must have chiefs who know how to command and soldiers who know how to obey. It must possess endurance and cohesion. It must possess tenacious patience, the abnegation which accustoms men to be satisfied with little; it must be ready for daily, hourly sacrifice. . . . That is only attained by preliminary instruction, a long discipline of the heart and muscles! . . . That discipline the Germans

had; you, who have seen this war, will be able to teach it to your sons."

"My sons," said Louis sadly. . . . "Yes, if I have any. Who would have anything to do with me, now?"

Marthe was sobbing bitterly by their side. M. Ellangé repented having spoken without reflexion. Alas! there was not a word which did not possess a double edge and surely wounded her! . . . But she raised her head and, wiping her eyes, said:

"You are right, father. It is for us to make our sons into true Frenchmen."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing, father."

She smiled with a strange air.

"The difficulty is not to do one's duty, but to know, sometimes, what one's real duty is. . . ."

They were still full of emotion when Otto returned to the house. He went straight up to his room, whistling a popular Hessian air, and was long in coming down. For the first time since his departure, he had taken off his uniform of a *Reservstabarzt,* and put on a lounge suit, which he had left behind him in July. He was in a charming humour, and on sitting down to table attempted to restore harmony. He related anecdotes, evoked recollections of the journey in Italy. One might have imagined, but for the empty seats and the mourning, that nothing had happened and that Otto Rudheimer had once more become the *privatdocent*

of former days. But joy appeared from underneath his countenance,— the insolent joy of the happy shopkeeper. However much he might attempt to hide it, everything about him proclaimed his pride at peace having been concluded at so high a price. . . . What a magnificent stake! . . . He showed his feelings, in spite of himself. He felt their reprobation, their bitter suffering. He tried to justify himself, to call off the dogs.

"You cannot pardon us, I feel, for having retaken Alsace and Lorraine. Certainly I can quite understand that it is hard for a French person to have to weep for the loss of these two provinces. . . . But you at least,"— turning towards his father-in-law,—" who know history so well, would admit to me, if your sorrow were not so keen, that to us Germans the case was identical. . . . Alsace and Lorraine were incontestably German; you took them, formerly, from the German Empire by force or by craft. Now, the bitter feeling of injured rights,— the feeling of humiliated national pride and material loss is not yet effaced with many of us. Our people cling to the old principle that a hundred years of injustice do not create an hour of right. . . . Consequently, how could you expect us not to profit by a successful war to satisfy ever living aspirations and re-establish what we call our right?"

"Allow me!" said M. Ellangé.

"Oh! I know quite well that from the French

point of view things are presented differently. . . . Long possession, which gives you a title? . . . The little security which would exist between states in their political relations, if they had a desire to revive all the rights which have lapsed? . . . Finally, you would put forward as an argument the feelings of the populations themselves, who would belong to France and not to Germany? . . . As regards this last point, I believe that these feelings are transitory, and that the fundamentally German character of the country will soon transform them, as soon as the uneasiness which every state of transition brings with it has vanished. I deny also that a part of a nation has the right to choose its path in conformity with its caprice. As to the affirmation that our rights had lapsed, I reply that to us nothing has lapsed so long as we retain the living feeling of having submitted to an injustice."

He became silent and calmly waited for the reply. It was not long in coming.

"You allege your right. I deny it. Formerly, we did, in fact, conquer Metz, and Alsace, with the exception of Strasburg and Mülhausen, by successful wars on the Holy Roman Germanic Empire. But I beg you to tell me what there is in common between that Empire and the one you have just established? Nothing! . . . The body of the German Empire in those days was Austria,—that Austria which the protestant princes of the North already combated, long before Sadowa! For it

was precisely in concert with those princes that we accomplished our conquest. . . . They were our allies and used our support to extend their dominions. . . . Confess that they have acted ungraciously in reproaching us to-day with the benefits of common victories . . . in dragging from us as illegitimate possessions confirmed by the Peace of Westphalia, to which you owe your liberty of conscience and the beginning of your grandeur. There remains Mülhausen, which was allied to the Swiss Confederation and passed in 1798 to the French Republic by a special treaty. . . ."

"And Strasburg?" laughed Otto,—"Strasburg which Louis XIV in time of peace took by force and kept?"

"Yes, Strasburg . . ." admitted M. Ellangé, "Strasburg which was taken two hundred years ago from Ferdinand of Habsburg, that is to say from Austria again, from the very princes whom Prussia has violently driven from Germany! . . . Strasburg which has since become so French! No, Monsieur Rudheimer, believe me, don't rely upon history as a foundation for your rights."

Otto changed his tactics.

"Our people don't enter into these niceties. To them Germany is Germany, and the Empire is the Empire. Well-founded or not, the feeling of the German nation is undeniable. It believes in the legitimacy of its rights,— believes with entire good faith. The fatal consequence is precisely that, in

such a case, each nation thinks right is on its side. There is nothing to be done then but to appeal to force,— *ultima ratio regum!* Your fabulist has expressed it in a phrase: *'La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure,'*—'He who is the stronger has always the better of the argument.'"

"So be it," said M. Ellangé. "I appreciate irony. At any rate you are frank. This country pleases me, so I take it. . . . I have need of Metz and Strasburg, on account of their strategic positions, so I keep them . . . *Ego nominor leo.* . . . This thesis is perhaps worthy of a Pomeranian Corporal, but I am surprised to hear it in your mouth,— you, Otto Rudheimer, a *savant,* a Hessian, annexed only yesterday to Prussia! . . . One word more! You refuse nations the right of disposing of themselves, and in that respect, with your theory of force, you are logical. . . . But in that case, don't talk to us any more of those rights which nothing prescribes so long as the feeling of having submitted to an injustice lasts! . . . We, on the contrary, allow the plebiscitum, we believe that a group of men cannot be put into an enclosure like cattle, that the desires of the heart and soul must be taken into account. By two centuries of care and friendship we have made Alsace and Lorraine French. They will remain French, at any rate in heart, longer perhaps than you imagine. If Prussia, if Germany (should you prefer this name, since they are now one and the same), think in this way,

— they who dismembered Poland,— so be it! . . . To us French people this is not a question of one historical right being opposed to another. It is a question of justice. A matter of sentiment. . . . I fear that we shall never come to an agreement on that ground. You smile? To you justice is strength,— your strength? . . . Well, to us justice is not a German privilege; it is the final word of human reason! That reason is better than the reason of force. Force changes camps. We possessed it before you. Take care that some day we do not find it again, hand in hand with reason."

Otto continued to smile with disdainful pity. His strong teeth protruded, as though ready to bite, between his open lips. Pushing back his chair, he rose from the table and said:

"Let us see if Hermann has finished his little supper! . . . You will accompany me, Marthe."

She obeyed, suddenly very pale. Trembling, she had followed, with Louis, the whole of the discussion; she had contained herself with difficulty, had been ready to interrupt at every word, so much had Otto's tyrannical pride, his hard and unconscious hypocrisy revolted her. Through that mouth which had lavished upon her so many tender words and kisses, the whole of Germany, malignant and cunning, had spoken. Not a trace of the old Otto existed. Another man, with another soul, and whose power she detested, was before her.

"I didn't think fit to reply to your father's

threats," said Otto when they were alone in their bedroom, illuminated by the feeble flame of a night-light. . . . "People have always twenty-four hours, in the least important case, in which to curse their judges; and with still more reason, in a litigation like this, in which the divine will has been pronounced. But I suppose that he speaks merely for himself, and that, as a woman and a mother, attached to your duty, you do not join forces with him. . . . Thank God! We have come to the end of this hard trial. Everything ought now to be forgotten. . . . In a fortnight, doubtless, a part of the German armies will return home. . . . I shall then leave my post. . . . You will precede me to Marburg, with our son. And we can resume life as in the past, in our dear little house."

He drew aside the light curtain under which the child was peacefully sleeping, with mouth slightly open and little fists clenched. Having contemplated him for a moment in silence, his face brightened. In the little features he discovered an exact resemblance to himself, the solid head of a genuine Rudheimer. . . . Marthe's voice surprised him in the midst of his revery. He turned his head,— displeased, hostile beforehand, so gravely did she speak.

"Listen, Otto. It is time that we should come to an explanation as regards our mutual relations. . . . For three months have we been living side by side without daring to confess what was passing

within us. . . . Insensibly we have become modified, without our exterior attitudes revealing the profound change which has taken place within us. . . . This cannot last any longer. Perhaps you would accommodate yourself to my silence and a superficial submission. . . . But I cannot agree to the protraction of this situation. I have suffered too much! . . . You must know me, as I have become, just as I know you now, as you are."

He stiffened, suddenly fearing that the misunderstanding was even deeper than he had thought, and forewarned against a rebellion which offended his patriotism as much as his affection.

"I foresaw this moment. I am listening to you."

"You speak to me of my duty as a woman and a mother. No one, you may be certain, is more keenly alive than I am to the seriousness of that duty. Only, what exactly is this duty? We do not look at it from the same point of view, and therein lies our misunderstanding. We look at nothing now with the same eyes! . . . I loved in you a person whom I had figured under certain features, and now I can perceive nothing of this person in you. I thought you were good, liberal-minded and upright, and I find that you are hard, short-sighted and even false. . . . We had common tastes and pleasures. . . . At the idea of sharing them with you in the future, I regard them with horror. . . . Literature and music with you would be torture to me. . . . I cannot conceive the pos-

sibility of living under your roof . . . and my whole being, at the idea of sleeping in your bed, revolts. . . . That which united us is dead. . . . Oh! I can read what is in your eyes. You judge me to be fickle and ungrateful,— a true Frenchwoman! Alas! no, I am the same. Only, love enveloped our life, like a veil. . . . The war has torn it in shreds. . . . All that remains are two beings of a different race face to face, and between them everything which divides: habits, customs, feelings, thoughts, that slow formation which comes from far beyond childhood and which our parents inherited from theirs, the contrast of our educations, the antagonism of our religions and nationalities, the thousand minute differences which made us what we were and what we are — strangers to each other!"

Otto was touched by the sincerity and profundity of her confession. He recognised that she saw clearly, without admitting that such a reality could survive the hours which imposed it. It was but an ephemeral result. Due to momentary circumstances, it would vanish with them. . . . He stretched his hand in the direction of the cradle.

"In my eyes," he said, "nothing can efface so quickly the recollection of the two years of happiness we have had together. If many things separate us, there is at least one which still unites us, and which will ever unite us, in spite of yourself. It is only the woman in you who has just confessed —

inconsiderately perhaps — all that the bitterness of such days as these has inspired. You will reflect. The mother ought to employ another language."

She shook her head.

"No, Otto, no! . . . For henceforth we are not merely strangers to each other. . . . In my eyes you are the Enemy. You are Germany, whose violent and rapacious spirit I hate,— Germany which I execrate with all the rage of a vanquished woman and with all my French soul! . . . I desire your Hermann, my little Jean Pierre to be my revenge. I shall give him a taste and love for everything which you despise and I admire. . . . I will make him, in the place of my brother Jacques, killed at Borny, into a soldier according to my ideas, a genuine Picard, a good Frenchman. I will return him to his Fatherland! . . . You see it is not only the present but the past and the future which separates us. It is the dead. . . . And it is the life which sleeps there, that little life which is now all my own!"

"Oh! oh!" he exclaimed, sneeringly, "I perceive that your way of regarding duty, both in your quality as a mother and in your quality as a wife, resembles as little as possible my own way of looking at things. You forget but one thing,— namely, that what we desire does not always agree with what is. Fortunately there are laws in Hesse, as in France, which are observed in such cases. And I'm not quite sure,— indeed, I very much doubt,—

that the law allows you such great liberty. You must take a little into account, my dear, the authority of the husband and the father."

"You would take me back against my will? You would take my child away from me? Oh! I know you are capable of it! And the law would be on your side. . . . If not the law, force! . . . Why no! when you are no longer intoxicated with victory, you will understand that you cannot always gag and imprison a human being . . . you will blush at your violence."

"It is not at all a question of violence. I merely appeal to your sense of equity. If you consider that you are liberated from your duties towards me, you will surely acknowledge that you have some towards your son. . . . Have not I some also? Don't you consider that our duties and even our rights are at least equal? . . . Be just, since in your family and in your country, you boast of being so!"

His voice was embittered with rancour. There was no longer between them even that sympathy which springs from misfortune, and which had sometimes, in their blackest hours, drawn them together. They were but the conqueror and the conquered, Germany and France engaged in conflict. . . . She replied:

"Ah! if only you had a little of that generosity which is becoming to one who triumphs! . . . If you but sympathised with me in my sorrow!"

Her nervous tension had become so great that

she was ready to break down. She bit her lips until the blood came, to prevent herself from bursting into tears. . . . Otto shrugged his shoulders. Far from exciting his pity, such overexcitement appeared to him to be absurd and out of place. Pointing to his son, he began to joke.

"I hope you don't intend to introduce this childish nervousness into your system of education. . . . Men must have virile examples before their eyes. . . . Fortunately he will find them at the University of Marburg."

Drying her reddened eyes with her wet handkerchief, she retorted, defiantly:

"Or at the Lycée of Amiens!"

The Otto and the Marthe of former days, ready to seize each other by the throat, stared at one another for a long minute. Their looks collided like swords. . . . They felt, as the blood suddenly rushed to their brains, an innominable desire,— the instinct which kills. . . . Then, something which had still been beating within them died. . . . It was the past; it had fled for ever. . . . And fully conscious of the irreparable, they both stepped back. . . .

At last Otto murmured, as though to himself:

"Why torture oneself beforehand? . . . We must give to-morrow time to come!"

Once more he went to bend, between the momentarily raised curtains over the little body reposing in the cradle. . . . Henceforth all his wealth

lay there. But years would have to go by before a soul awakened in that German flesh. . . . It would be time to dispute over it then! . . . Drawing up his broad figure and with a feeling of confidence, he left the room, without a farewell. It was the only attitude which fitted his unrecognised power.

He made no allusion on the following days to what had occurred. He feared to show the violence of his distress. A feeling of jealous sorrow tortured him; — a furious desire came over him to keep and possess the fleeing prey, against her will. The more he felt she was lost, the less he wished to renounce her. He was the master, they saw that very well. Apart from the evening meals and their rare meetings at Hermann's bedside, he had no further relations with his wife. His work — the almost continual evacuation of wounded, Germans or French, for Germany — absorbed the whole of his time. Certain signs announced the approaching departure. Caissons and cannon were being removed from the citadel. A quantity of salted meat, now useless, was put up for sale at the railway station. A thousand carts set off in long files for the frontier. People would no longer meet the carters, with their blue blouses, their numbered felt hats, their thick mufflers and their red waistcoats.

M. Ellangé and Louis had resumed a more active life. They saw, if not the end of the occupation — for months would elapse before France could pay

her ransom of thousands of millions — at least the loosening of the bolts on their prison doors, the possibility of moving about and breathing more freely. Louis came across some old comrades among the *mobiles* of the North who had returned from Paris. Disbanded after the long months of the siege, they came back full of narratives, and still in a state of feverish excitement over their agitated captivity. Otto vied in politeness with M. Ellangé, who, satisfied with having been able to unburden his heart, was anxious to preserve a scrupulously correct attitude until the time came for them to part. The approaching arrival of the Emperor Guillaume was announced; he was to pass through Amiens, on his way back to Germany, and hold a grand review. By the 8th, troops began to flow into the town, whilst the people shut up their shops and the streets emptied. The place was full of soldiers. Marthe recollected the invasion which had preceded the battle of Pont-Noyelles. Heavy landwehriens, with their trousers turned up and their waxed leather shakos, rubbed shoulders with hussars with trailing swords; their sabretaches beat against their tight-fitting breeches. Huge white cuirassiers slouched about, thrusting out their chests, bearing the gilded spread-eagle. The new flag of the Empire, black, white and red, fluttered above the buildings. On the 10th, people learnt that William was not coming, but that he would be replaced by the Hereditary Prince.

A spring-like mildness floated in the less severe air. The sun shone on the tile roofs, on to which the pigeons alighted, amidst a great flapping of wings. On the eve of the review M. Ellangé suddenly decided to have his horse put into the carriage. He would profit by the fine afternoon to go as far as Pont-Noyelles, and, perhaps, if it was possible, he would sleep there, in the out-houses that had remained intact. In that way he would not hear from all parts of the town the sound of those triumphal bands which made him shudder . . . especially would he escape from the shrill sarcastic music of the fifes the recollection of which was mingled with that of his father. He would go to the cemetery, where the masons would soon have to work, when they undertook the translation of the body. And at the same time he would see if, before Easter, they could repair the left wing of the house which had suffered the least. . . . The country would do them all good. . . .

On that German fête day, when, on the road from Amiens to Querrieu, nearly 40,000 men, drawn up in line as far as the Alençons farm, cheered their Fritz, Marthe and Louis had taken a melancholy walk to the Madeleine cemetery. They had laid, on the already verdant tomb, where a wooden cross bore the name of Jean Pierre Ellangé, a few branches of box, gathered as they passed Dr. Nichamy's garden. Piously, they had both evoked the other tomb,— that marked by no cross, on the road

from Mey to Villers-l'Orme. Awaiting the day when, aided by Lieutenant Charbalyé, they could undertake the sad pilgrimage in search of that spot, they thought of those poor already half-consumed remains which, in their tenderness, they pictured as the living form of Jacques. . . . The eldest, the big brother, who had set out so handsome, so young, so confident! . . . Never more would they see him. Never, perhaps, would they discover what remained of him, that body which no longer reposed even on French soil, since Borny and Metz were now German.

On returning along the boulevards crowded by hundreds of grey transport vehicles, Marthe and Louis completed the drawing up of the funereal balance-sheet. Death had struck everywhere around them. There was not a family which did not mourn, as they did for a brother, a son or a husband. . . . Everybody they met was dressed in mourning and bore trouble on his or her desolated face. Further on they met thin and ailing workwomen, with kerchiefs wrapped tightly round their shoulders, workmen with grey beards and tattered clothing, and pitiable little *bourgeois*. . . . Where there was no mourning, there was poverty, with its procession of disease and ruin. . . . What punishment had been meted out to them themselves, who were sheltered from need by fortune! . . . They confided in each other, took a lamentable delight in scrutinising together their sorrows.

"There are hours," confessed Louis, "when I envy those who have gone. I feel so disgusted with life that, but for the thought of causing mamma sorrow, I should kill myself. The future is as dark for me as the present. There is no justice. . . . I have no belief in anything. . . . And when I again believe in something, what shall I do? . . . Nothing! I am nothing but an invalid. . . . Before the war I had reasons for acting, for being happy. . . . But now all I'm good for is to pine away with powerlessness and regret! . . . To be mutilated, half dead, is perhaps still sadder than being no more. . . . Dead, we no longer suffer."

She sought and found consoling words. . . . But with a sorrowful denial the one-armed man indicated the empty arm of his coat pinned across his breast.

"What would you have me become, now? . . . You speak to me of happiness? . . . Ah! Marthe, if you only knew . . . I never told you anything about it. . . . You were then in Germany. . . . And when you returned the war began, and since —"

He shook his head. Their minds were filled with thoughts of the tragic whirlwind through which they had passed.

"I guess, little brother . . ."

"No, you don't know her. . . . She's the daughter of an Abbeville manufacturer. . . . Louise . . . Louise Fontanes. . . . She came to pass the last

holidays at Pont-Noyelles, with our neighbours the De Nerfeuils, cousins of hers. . . . So pretty, so sweet! . . . I loved her immediately. . . . I was not distasteful to her. . . . We talked together of the future. . . . The future! *Voilà*. . . ."

"But, Louis, if she loves you . . ."

"No, no! . . . I don't want to be an object of pity. . . . I don't want, now, to encumber her life. . . . It is finished, finished!"

Marthe passed her hand tenderly under the poor trembling arm. Sorrow brought them very close together. Their eyes, which had shed so many tears, remained dry and they felt what a misfortune it was, at the height of misfortune, to be even unable to weep. Among so many miseries, which, in overwhelming the country, had affected every one, the least painful were not those which they bore, with feelings of regret and hatred, at the bottom of their hearts. Of all their ills, they detested the cruellest, the poisoned wound of love.

XII

Otto was walking backwards and forwards in his wife's bedroom, with a violent step and his clenched fists behind his back. Marthe, standing near the cradle, was setting him at defiance, in silence. . . . No, she would not follow him! No, she would not leave Amiens at this moment! . . . Relieved, she waited. . . . What could he do?

"So you refuse? . . . You refuse?"

Standing in front of her, with face thrust forward and threatening eyes, he endeavoured to instil his will into her black look.

On the previous day they had heard from the orderly that the departure, foreseen for some days past, would take place at the end of the week, doubtless on Saturday, March 19th. The troops which did not form part of the corps of occupation, all the officers and soldiers of the *landwehr* would return to Germany. The day after the review the regiments were drawn up in echelons on the already dusty roads. A doctor of the active army would replace Otto at the head of the hospital, where a very small number of wounded were to remain.

On the receipt of this news Marthe had asked her father for his advice. She had decided not to

return to Marburg, at least for some months. Without having yet determined to bring about a definite rupture, she could not face the possibility of again living side by side with her husband, especially in a country where everything was henceforth more than foreign, hostile. No, after so much suffering, captivity and exile, that was beyond her strength! . . . Could she ever put on her chains again? She avoided settling the question. But today it was simply impossible. . . . The magistrate had listened to her in silence. On his glabrous face, with its protruding cheek-bones, no sign of emotion revealed the father's joy. His sunken eyes seemed dead. With his bony fingers he twisted one of his white whiskers. . . . Legally — there could be no doubt about that — Marthe ought to obey. Her husband had the right to call in the public force to make her return, *manu militari,* to the conjugal domicile. The court would support his claim. But, in law, this procedure was long and, moreover, little adopted; and, in fact, M. Ellangé could not very easily imagine Otto dragging his wife by the wrists or the hair. . . . If she refused, it would bring about a separation with all its consequences: the child taken from her and even divorce, if Otto wished to have recourse to it, since the Hessian law allowed it. . . . All rights were on the side of the husband. . . .

"Act according to your conscience, my daughter," he had concluded. "If you remain, we will

endeavour to make you very happy, and we will attempt to defend your interests and those of your son. . . . If you leave —"

A gesture had completed his thought. Marthe had immediately measured the abyss. No, she would not waste what remained of her youth and strength in a life in which she would have to abdicate everything. . . . No, she would not submit to the slow torture of becoming a German, against her will! No, she would not abandon the supreme relic, that which remained of France in the dear little being who was now the future!

Put out of temper by the insulting silence, Otto repeated in a hollow voice:

"You have well reflected? . . . You refuse?"

"I refuse."

"Very well, I shall take legal steps. You shall return by fair means or foul."

"Like a stolen article, in your baggage?"

The blood rushed to his face. He cried:

"Marthe!"

She felt her injustice, but gave herself up to it with a wicked joy.

"Do you think you can dispose of a human being as easily as a clock?"

The anger of the conqueror boiled in his veins, with their sluggish flow. That this Frenchwoman, in whom all the audacity of the crushed nation made its appearance, should dare — she a mere woman — to raise her head, should insult the whole of con-

quering Germany, filled him with savage rage. For he clearly saw that she was the mistress of the situation, as of herself, and that he could do nothing, without making himself ridiculous and odious, — nothing against this fragile will, stronger than the law and armies! A desire to employ violence came over him. The feeling of his physical superiority aroused a brutal instinct and made him raise his heavy hand. But it immediately fell by his side again. What would he have gained when he had gripped that delicate neck and crushed those fragile arms? She would not even hate him the more! . . . And this intuition also increased his anger. It was finished, finished! Never would she love him any more! . . . He had for ever lost those eyes the soul of which had laughed at him, those lips which had melted under his own, those hands which had caressed his forehead during evenings of work and meditation, at Marburg, under the light of the lamp! He had lost that firm, soft body which, before becoming the august body of a mother, had been that of a lover. . . . This tender regret tortured him, still more perhaps than her rebellious spirit. . . . About to lose both body and soul, he felt that he could not renounce them; he clung to them greedily, as to a property to which one holds on all the tighter the more one feels it is slipping through one's fingers. But he had such an absolute certainty that all was now lost that an over-

whelming stupor succeeded his attitude of the last few days and his still more recent fit of anger.

Seeing him give way, Marthe pushed her advantage.

"No. I will not leave. You have no means of forcing me to do so."

He shrugged his shoulders, disdainfully.

"Remain then! . . . It's not you I want."

Quickly, he raised his son from the cradle. Tickled by Otto's long beard, the baby smiled. Dimples appeared on his pretty cheeks. He waved his arms and crowed.

"This is all that matters to me," said Otto. "I shall write this evening to my mother. In a week she will be here to fetch Hermann."

"You would take him from me?"

The indignant cry sprang from her motherly heart. Otto bowed, jeeringly. He, in turn, was triumphing.

"It rests with you whether you will separate yourself from him or not."

"You would take him from me? At the risk of killing both of us! For you know he needs my care, my milk!"

"He's half weaned already. . . . Moreover, there are good nurses at Marburg."

He put the child back into his cradle. But, excited by the movement, he stretched out his tiny hands, to be taken up again.

"There, there!" said Otto in German. "Calm yourself, playful little man!"

He pulled up the light coverlet as far as the baby's chin and tucked in the bedclothes. In the presence of his coldly resolute air, Marthe saw herself suppressed; Jean Pierre would be in the hands of another! . . . The father alone, sad grandparents would occupy themselves with him. An odious language would ceaselessly sound in his ears, his tenderness and intelligence would expand, far from her, under a foreign influence and foreign habits. Unable to support the idea of this torture, she suddenly became humble.

"I will not separate myself from my son. . . . He needs my presence for a long time yet. You didn't seriously think of that."

"And I also can only say: 'I will not separate myself from my son.'"

A sudden emotion impelled her to say:

"Otto, you are the master. Be generous. Don't abuse your victory, which is sufficiently complete. . . ."

He had begun walking up and down the room again. He reflected, with bowed head. . . . She was giving way. She had confessed her inferiority! . . . Little by little his anger subsided. He did not rejoice, in his deeply wounded masculine self-esteem, that she consented to obey, since the mother alone had given way! . . . Was not their

private life irremediably spoilt? . . . And then, certain now that, some day or other, she would return to Marburg, he suddenly ceased to desire her, in whom he merely saw a stubbornly opposed companion. . . . He was nevertheless flattered at having imposed his authority and made her feel the bit. With less severity he said:

"You are ready then to conduct yourself as you ought?"

She murmured:

"I will submit to anything rather than abandon my son."

"Oh! I don't delude myself. . . . Hermann alone calls you back to the sense of reality."

There was a silence. Each was buried in thought: he less anxious, now that he had obtained satisfaction, to demand an immediate departure; she bewildered, now that she had made her sacrifice. . . . What, leave everything; her father who in a few months had become an old man, her mother, a sorrowful shadow, and her mutilated brother, Louis? Tear herself away from her dear native place,— the ground where she had taken root again? . . . Desert the vanquished France to go and live a life of slavery, in the midst of humiliation and solitude, with the conquerors? . . . In spite of the consolation her son would be to her, what sort of an existence would she have in Marburg, between the scornful pity and the suspicion of her parents-

in-law and Otto's frigid companionship? . . . It would be like life in a convict-prison! Wringing her hands, she supplicated.

"If you have still a little heart left, if you recollect having loved me, do not compel me to leave immediately! Give me time to recover possession of myself. . . . Let me get used to the idea of saying farewell to everything which surrounds me. . . . Have pity on my sorrow! You cannot understand it, because all your thoughts are at present in opposition to mine. . . . You feel according to your masculine soul,— that of a German and a conqueror. . . . But what shall I find at Marburg? The recollection of everything I am going to leave! . . . You cannot bear malice against me for now preferring my family and my mourning country! . . . Never should I have believed that such bonds could unite a person to the past, to the parents who created her, to the land which nourished and formed her. . . . Between you and me there is only the slight attachment of joy, two short years which have passed like a dream. . . . In the case of my parents, there is the long communion of my childhood and youth! I thought for a moment that love had effaced all that! . . . Then France's misfortune came and I found myself again. . . . Otto, people do not know each other, they live in a world of illusion so long as they are surrounded by happiness. . . . It is only in misfortune that they can see others and themselves clearly. Whilst you and your coun-

try knew only joy, alone I touched, with my country and parents, the depths of misfortune. It was then that I saw that, above everything, I loved all those nameless things which are expressed in a single word: the fatherland!"

Otto looked at Marthe for a long time. At her involuntary *tutoiement,*[1] he had felt the vision of former days pass, like a fresh breeze, over his arid soul. . . . For the first time he had the feeling that those days were no more than a memory,— that is to say something distant and dead,— something infinitely sad.

"The fatherland!" murmured Marthe.

There crowded before their eyes the images, with all their divers colours, contained in the great mysterious word. The fields of France and Germany stretched out in the sweetness of the natal air. Mountains, rivers, the face of the plains, and the towns with their living stones sprang up; the whole treasury of recollection, song and legend. . . . A past of glory and misfortunes floated — folds of standards — above church spires and churchyard crosses. . . . Woven by rain and sun, the beautiful face, the confused shape of the earth became outlined, took form, palpitated amidst the scent of forests and the trembling of the grass. . . . It was like rippling water, the sound of a voice, the beauty of a verse or a statue; it possessed the smile of chil-

[1] In speaking of Otto and his country, Marthe used the familiar *ton* and *toi:* "ton pays et toi."

dren and the look of love. It was the sweetness and reason of life.

With the proud ardour of his new faith, Otto loved it. But Marthe was stirred by a profounder emotion. . . . With all her filial tenderness and piety, she venerated the torn body, the beautiful, mutilated face.

"Otto," she said at last, "you who have just fought for the German fatherland cannot blame me for having a greater love to-day for my native country, since she is in misfortune."

They had once more become poor beings full of suffering and a power to comprehend. The plaything of Fate, they were unable to resist the obscure current which tore them apart. . . . Time rushed headlong,— irresistible, and on the foam danced the fragments of older days.

"All that is quite true," sighed Otto. "What then?"

"Trust in me! . . . When a little time has passed by, when the wound is less open, I will come of my own accord with our child."

"Very good," said Otto. "Then I will set out alone, with your word."

One after the other they bent over the child, who had quietly gone to sleep again. They kissed him on the forehead and then looked at each other with the same thought. They had said farewell to their past,— that dead past which, whatever they might do, Hermann Jean Pierre Rudheimer bore within

him. For a moment, after being drawn together by the gravity of the solemn homage they were rendering, they stepped back, thinking of the dim and uncertain future. . . . However, when on the point of shooting back the bolt which he had pushed to in prevision of this discussion, Otto hesitated. . . . And returning to Marthe, he awkwardly, timidly held out his hand. . . . They had ceased to love, but they could still esteem each other. . . . She also hesitated, then, her eyes dim with tears, advanced her fingers. . . . It was a weak, uncertain hand-clasp, no sooner begun than ended, amidst the confusion of their feeble hearts. . . .

Two days later Otto set off on his journey. It was the morning of March 20th. The news of the insurrection in Paris had provided a diversion from the embarrassment of their last hours together. Since the previous day people had commented on the assassination of Generals Lecomte and Clément Thomas, the city in the hands of the revolted national guard, Thiers and the government in flight. . . . Otto, wearing his uniform for the last time, listened with a politeness in which there was a spice of contempt. These upheavals, which M. Ellangé severely condemned, provided — and Louis, in spite of his sympathy for great republican Paris, was the first to confess it — the most lamentable spectacle. How the Germans, following the drama with their glasses from the heights of the ramparts of the forts, must have rejoiced, judging by Otto's half-

hidden smile. However, the details and unforeseen vicissitudes of the struggle were returned to again and again, and thus the painful moments preceding the separation were shortened. Every one felt ill at ease. The Ellangés strove to hide their anxiety to see the house rid of their guest; Marthe, with a feeling now and then of shame, shared their insolent joy. Otto was the most troubled of all. At times he regretted his generosity, came to the conclusion that he had been duped. Every day which went by widened the breach between himself and this woman (was she his wife?),— between himself and his son. . . . Their fit of tenderness over, the father and mother had once more, in spite of their tacit truce, become at war again. . . . When the moment came to mount his horse, Otto had several times taken the child from Marthe's arms to kiss him once more. All four had momentarily stood face to face, not knowing what to say. Words would not have expressed their true feelings; there was too much rancour between them,— their wounds, all of which, they felt, would never be healed, were still too fresh. Around his parents-in-law, motionless in their black clothes, Otto involuntarily sought for the grandfather and Jacques, witnesses of other departures. . . . How could he hold out his hand to those hands which refused to seek his? . . . Yet he would have liked to have shaken hands with his hosts, as much on account of his loyalty as an honest man as because of a feeling

of national pride; to clasp hands would have been very much of an homage, a little like amnesty. . . . But Louis' attitude finally warned him. The young man hid his remaining arm behind his back; and both his glaring look and the empty sleeve pinned on his breast seemed to say, "I cannot!" . . . So, with his heels together in military fashion and with a grand salute, Otto took his leave. Silently, as awkwardly, as timidly as two days before, he touched Marthe's fingers. . . . The orderly held the bridle and the stirrup. Otto, to keep himself in countenance, verified the length of the stirrup-straps, inspected the girth, and, having sprung into the saddle, once more rapidly brought his right hand to the level of his flat cap. . . . Then, without turning his head, he slowly rode away, as though he had been a stranger, a passing guest, in the conquered town. . . .

Not one of the Ellangés gave a thought to the sorrow which this attitude might conceal. When Otto disappeared round the corner of the Rue Porte-de-Paris, they felt as though a spectre had vanished from before them. They gave a sigh of relief. It was as though the house again belonged to them; they returned to it, after a long absence; they drew the curtains, opened the windows to the pure air and the full sunlight. Marthe was the only one, as she ascended with her son in her arms, who followed with a brief melancholy farewell the passer-by who carried away with him for ever the

most beautiful years of her life. How far off they were already, how effaced from the memory! Those were the years when Marburg was but a little town of Hesse, when France lived a glorious life under the Empire! . . . Since then the Empire had crumbled to the ground, dragging France with it. . . . Another Empire, amidst the smoke of battles, had arisen on her mutilated native land, on its towns, on the wounded and the dead. . . . This was all the passer-by had left behind him. . . . Passer-by! Pass on thy way! . . . She pressed Jean Pierre against her heart, but she only associated him with the idea of Otto in order to turn away from the latter and hasten towards the future. . . . Even the father had disappeared. . . . The dear little being was the only one to remain, and already in her soul she raised him, like an offering, towards the fatherland. Jean Pierre would replace Jacques.

April came and with it a blue cloudless sky, so resplendent, amidst the warm light, that one asked oneself if winter had ever existed, that terrible winter of rain, fog and frost during which hundreds of thousands of men, dying of hunger and cold, had tramped in the midst of bloody mud and snow over fields and roads strewn with bodies. The buds, the little green leaves clothed each day, with an ever-increasing verdant lacework, the black trees of the Esplanade. At Easter the whole household moved to Pont-Noyelles. Everybody was in a hurry to

flee from Amiens and forget that the Prussians were still in occupation there. Hastily repaired, the left wing of the house offered a sufficiently comfortable shelter. Marthe could not look upon the everywhere tangible traces of the battle without suddenly feeling that she was torn, as much as ever, by the old impressions.

The principal façade was but a cracked and blackened wall, with yawning openings and a fallen in roof. Every afternoon, on their way to the orchard, they had to pass in front of the greenhouse, every pane of which was broken. The flower-beds, where wall-flowers were here and there springing up again, were covered with wheel-marks.

But under the plum-trees, in the long grass where the primroses and violets grew, the nightmare vanished. There, in the great silence, under the low, perfumed trees, similar to large pink and white bouquets, Nature serenely continued her interrupted work. Insects ran about on the mossy paths, and in the blue air yellow butterflies flitted. On the banks of the Hallue the poplars still raised their fresh spindle-like forms, and the aspens, at the slightest breeze, trembled like a silver veil.

Jean Pierre, installed in his carriage, was sleeping by Marthe's side. She had resumed, in company with her mother, their little pieces of work of former days. Knitting, fashioned with agile fingers, had been succeeded by bands of embroidery. . . . Mme. Ellangé, continually fatigued, set down

upon her knees the piece of green American cloth on which the linen she was embroidering was tacked. . . . Marthe looked at her stealthily. How she had aged! Her hair had become quite white; her face, formerly so round, was hollow-cheeked; her eyes were of a still paler blue, through shedding many tears. Though but forty-eight, she appeared to be sixty. Every spring was broken within her. . . . With her arms hanging down and a vague look in her eyes, her thoughts revolved around the happiness which had fled from her. She resembled a shadow.

Nimbly, Marthe added stitch to stitch. With the same thread she sewed the silk and her thoughts. She advanced, needleful after needleful, across the desolate field of recollections to the edge where the road turned towards the unknown of to-morrow. Her thoughts were confused, without apparent connection, but they ever returned to Louis. He was shaking off the torpor of his despair with difficulty, was reopening his books. M. Ellangé persuaded him that he could still continue to plead. No one, on seeing one of the sleeves of his gown hanging down by his side, would think of smiling. . . . Everybody, on the contrary, would surround him with sympathy. Come now, he would make a fine figure, soon, with the ribbon of the Legion of Honour on his breast,— the red ribbon, the colour of blood! . . . Louis gently acquiesced; but Marthe could clearly see, when he came to sit down near his

nephew,— whose nose he tickled with a leaf,— what an incurable regret was hidden by his pale, tired smile. He was sorrowing over his amputated youth, his lost love.

May came and with it the enchantment of the roses. There were blooms in all the alleys. M. Ellangé, his forehead shaded by a straw hat, went from one tree to another, with pruning shears in his hand. He cut off the suckers and drove away the plant-lice. Only the vegetable life of Nature now interested him. He in no way resembled the former Imperial Procurator. He was round-shouldered and dragged his legs as he walked; on the bony face, formerly arrogant and hard, nothing could be read save sadness; his complexion, once yellow, had become cadaverous. The last ten months of anguish had left their mark on his temples, lined with a thousand wrinkles, on his drooping mouth, with its bitter furrows. Nothing that he had loved existed any more. The bar like the Republic was full of new figures. He felt that he was a useless old man, only fit to wait for the liquidation of his pension. And then the end would come! All his philosophy had left him, and even in his library, surrounded by his beautifully bound books, which by a miracle had been saved, he remained musing for hours, without even thinking of taking down from the familiar shelf one of his classics, the Cicero or the good Horace of former days. Reading — all the rubbish of historians and poets!

— had become odious to him. How full of vanity were human ideas,— these literatures and sciences which ended in the shambles of Sedan and Metz, in the cannon's brutal denial! . . . "Do you know, Marthe," said he, "when I think that, after the foreign war, we are now submitting to a civil war, when I think that Paris and Versailles have begun to massacre each other, I have a desire to turn my face to the wall like the Major and let death take me!"

She tried in vain to rouse his courage. The bloody end of the Commune, in the midst of murder and fire, struck all of them with horror. . . . "The Court of Accounts, the Louvre, the Tuileries!" murmured M. Ellangé. . . . Their eyes followed in the black spirals of smoke, in the scarlet flames, this disappearance of the past. All the glory of France was being scattered to the winds; nothing remained but shame and rage, the loathsome odour of blood.

More closely, in those days which recalled and surpassed the worst stages of their punishment, the Ellangé family drew together, in the house which had also been sacked. . . . By forming a close community all their sorrows were grouped together. It seemed to them that by supporting the crushing load conjointly, each felt its weight less. Never, more than in the intimacy of those weeks, when they tried to take up life again, when, bit by bit, they remade, for their souls tossed about by the

tempest, a precarious nest, had Marthe felt the comfort of that affection to which no other is equal. She came to understand the sweetness and strength of the bonds which unite parents to their child and a sister to her brother. Two short years had not sufficed (as, for a moment, she had thought between Otto and herself, at Marburg!) to form the solid and supple links of that tenderness which her parents felt, that understanding which is comprehended by a sign or a silence. It was made up of a continuous chain of joys and sorrows, old sacrifices, great and small events, of everything and nothing. It came from a very distant past. Before them other Ellangés had woven that tenderness, with their lives and their deaths.

The Past! . . . Beyond the war, beyond the years at Marburg, it began, insensibly, to regain possession of Marthe. . . . It insinuated itself into her; it floated around her. It was the Past which, without her knowing it, she met when, wandering through the devastated streets of Pont-Noyelles, she saw her adolescence rise from the thresholds of the doors with the little girls who were playing there. *"File, file, ma quenouille! . . . Le temps passe, le temps va!"* It was the Past which sang through the careless voices, as it had sung twenty years before with her own voice, as, during two hundred years, it had sung before the same doors, with the voices of other little girls. One after the other they had become mothers, and then grand-

mothers, and other little girls had sung. It was the Past which gave the tombstones in the humble cemetery so warm a colour, which covered them with lichens, so that the engraved names were no longer distinguishable. It was the Past which covered the ground with the mounds of the dead, which made the box-bush grow green and the warm circular shadow of the old lime-tree on the low wall so pleasant. . . .

Every Sunday, after mass, Marthe sat for a moment or two under that patch of shade. From there she could see the distant tops of the trees of the park, and, on turning round, the black marble plaque on the wall of the mausoleum. The golden letters of a new name shone at the bottom of the list of the dead: "Jean Pierre Ellangé, 1789–1870." His vault was ready. Marthe thought sadly of the absence of the other name. When would they be able to have the second line engraved? Mentally she repeated the funereal syllables: "Jacques Ellangé, 1842–1870." Would the big brother ever rest on French ground, near those of his family and his race?

It was at the beginning of June, with the sun shining splendidly, that the translation of the Major's remains took place. Marthe, confiding her son to her mother and old Julie, wished to accompany M. Ellangé and Louis to Amiens. She wished to place a few roses on Frida Lehmann's tomb, and then, in a carriage, follow the funeral procession

from the Madeleine cemetery to Pont-Noyelles. During the carrying out of the administrative formalities, including the painful recognition of the body, she went to pray in the Cathedral. She reached the open grave at the moment the hearse was starting and had just time to hurry to the neighbouring sepulchre and place her bouquet on the stela, which she had had raised to the memory of her friend. . . . Poor Frida! She also had been a victim! . . . The long journey was made at walking pace. At the Chaussée Saint Pierre they met a Prussian detachment,— foot-soldiers of the 44th regiment returning from drill. The father and his children looked at each other in silence. But the Prussians, in the mechanical manner in which they handle their arms, rendered honours. Unknowingly the conquerors of Sedan had saluted the conqueror of Jena.

A few days later M. Ellangé and Louis set out with Lieutenant Charbalyé for Lorraine. He had obtained permission to assist the parents of his friend in their searches. After a thousand difficulties all three at last reached the scene of the battle of August 14th. Step by step they followed the path taken by the 43rd regiment, found the spot where Jacques had fallen, and then returned to the alley of pine-trees, the sad road from Mey to Villers l'Orme. . . . Which of these sandy hillocks — all identical under the dark trees — covered the body of their dear one? In vain did Lieutenant

Charbalyé recall his recollections. Here they had buried Germans and French pell-mell; there a major and two captains. . . . The spot must be further on, unless . . . Winter had passed destroying the slender cross of branches. There was nothing now to mark the place where Jacques Ellangé, with his soldiers, slept his last sleep. . . . Germany kept the whole of him. When her father returned and she heard his narrative, Marthe mused a long time. It was all very well for Germany to stick black and white sign-posts on the territory of Lorraine, and along the arbitrary line of the new frontier! On the right bank of the Moselle, on the deep road from Mey to Villers l'Orme, Jacques reposed, all the same, in French soil!

July came and with it the magnificence of summer. The days passed in vain and Marthe's feelings remained as violent as at the time of Otto's departure. The interval had even resulted in her seeing things with still greater clearness. She could consider matters as a whole. She discovered that the more distant she felt from her German husband, the nearer she came to her own people, to her home, to the air of France. Since April she had received several letters from Marburg. Every one of them, in spite of their cautious tone, had caused her painful irritation; every one of them had revived, in little, the terrible year. Otto counted on her word,— awaited her. Would she come for the holidays? He gave no details re-

garding his own feelings, restricted himself to news about his parents and to wishing for longer reports (which Marthe sent him every week) concerning Hermann's health. . . . Left free to choose her own time, Marthe put off her decision from hour to hour. At first, relieved to find that she was free, she had put aside all idea of return. Later! . . . Then, little by little, she had returned to reality. She ceaselessly thought now of the fatal day when her promise would have to be fulfilled. She had promised to return when her wound was healed a little. . . . She must keep to her word! She in no way deceived herself as to the result. . . . It would be a question of a week or two! She, a German? She, condemned to such an asphyxiating life? Her whole being revolted. . . . What then? . . . But there was Jean Pierre to think about, or rather, as they called him over there, Hermann. . . . That was the difficult point, where the redoubtable unknown began. However, she had confidence.

On the day after that on which the corps of occupation left Amiens she made up her mind. She decided to leave via Belgium and thus avoid the odious crossing of Alsace. She would take with her, to look after Jean Pierre, her *femme de chambre,* Henriette, the gardener's daughter. It was July 23rd. Her father and mother accompanied her to the railway-station. . . . It was more than a year since, on a similar morning, she had arrived there with Otto.

Marburg at last appeared in the golden light of evening. Marthe took in, with a long look, the red railway-station, the bridges over the Lahn, the two towers of St. Elizabeth, the picturesque town stretched out on the side of the mountain, with its gardens and roofs, and, on the top, the château's feudal silhouette. . . . Nothing had changed. Otto was waiting for her on the platform, as though she was returning from a visit to Giessen. She recognised him in the distance by his tall stature.

He opened the carriage door and helped her to descend. . . . And he also had remained, or rather had once more become the same! . . . He was the Otto of former days, the one whom she had loved before the war. His face was once more good and loyal, his eyes were as clear as the waters of a spring. Only, a few grey hairs whitened his thick beard. And yet he was another man! . . . He contemplated her without knowing how to look, but immediately he understood and quickly turned aside to take his son from Henriette's arms. Wonder-struck, he kissed him. But on feeling the stiff hairs Jean Pierre began to cry lustily.

"This little fellow Hermann has improved wonderfully; he has doubled in weight," declared Otto in German, avoiding the *tu* or the *vous,* but with a manifest wish to set things right.

She replied in French:

"You think so?"

And calming the little one's great grief with a kiss, she added:

"Be good, Jean Pierre!"

The shock of the two Christian names, the inexpressible coldness, the opposition of one language to another completed Otto's impression as to the meaning of Marthe's reserved welcome. She had taken up this attitude for ever. The eternal antagonism would recommence, still more irremediably than at Amiens. Alone, in his little house, he had passed along the same road as Marthe, but in the opposite direction; — he had been as much drawn to her as she had felt estranged from him. Seeing her on the carriage step, looking so fresh and so beautiful, his old desire — greater than ever — had reawakened within him. Certainly he had not hoped that after such a trial as they had undergone they would find themselves intact, but he thought that perhaps with the fragments of their happiness they might still be able to rebuild a poor happiness. . . . But with one blow the humble building was brought to the ground,— a last ruin, after so many ruins! They were but two enemies of different race, face to face. Her clear eyes became veiled with tears. With a stamp of his foot he regained possession of himself.

Their odious existence began at that minute. . . . They knew the slow torture of living side by side and being unable to agree about anything. Their customs, habits and tastes were in absolute disagree-

morrow, be masters of ourselves? . . . Yet the Lord is my witness that I could still have loved you, had you been willing. . . . Oh! yes, I know! That would have been a superhuman effort on your part. . . . And that is neither your fault nor mine."

She looked at him, surprised, still distrustful.

Meditation and sorrow had, during these weeks when the supreme struggle had taken place within him, made his features paler and more refined. An expression of resigned sadness made his look — still bitter — less hard. He had questioned his conscience as a man. Had he the right to condemn this existence to death? Was it not just that he who had lost neither brother nor relatives — that he also should pay ransom for the triumph of his country? The sacrifice of his happiness was his contribution to the grandeur of Germany. With a mystic sorrow he accepted the sacrifice, however hard it might be.

"Yes, I have reflected, I have understood. . . . War has arisen between us, as between our two countries. . . . And war is a terrible thing!"

For a moment he was silent. They saw the scourge before them, and with flames whirling furiously, the crash of cannon, and the air rent with the death-rattle of the wounded.

"War makes man brutal. It kills the tenderest feelings."

Marthe closed her eyes. Their love lay among the dead. Both, with pious horror, thought of what

they had lost. . . . Their lives torn up by the roots, shattered! . . . She also saw the Major and Jacques; Otto, friends who had disappeared. . . . And around them they saw again, by hundreds of thousands, homes in mourning and corpses,—corpses already rotting under the earth. . . . More than two hundred thousand Frenchmen, more than one hundred and thirty thousand Germans! . . . With all her woman's soul she cursed the monstrous folly,— imbecile and savage war. . . . She had risen, was surveying the formerly familiar dining-room, with the Delft jar and its bunch of sunflowers, the white stove encircled with copper. She murmured:

"Yes, war. . . . Had it not been for the war —"

But Otto shook his head.

"We ought to bow before the supreme will. This war was destined. God willed it. A German, as a man, may feel sad over it, but he ought to regret nothing."

Marthe's tenderness suddenly vanished. As a Catholic and a Frenchwoman her soul rose up, armed, against the Protestant teuton, the intransigent conqueror. . . .

Otto continued:

"Depart. I cannot, nor do I wish to, keep you here against your will. I will ask the Court at Cassel to dissolve our marriage. . . . Your departure will constitute one of the grounds for divorce foreseen by our law. Desertion with a bad intention.

. . . Thus will be broken the bond which tortures us. You can become a Frenchwoman again."

There was a fearful ring of regret in his voice. How quickly Marthe would forget! . . . Overwhelmed, she had leaned for support against the back of the arm-chair. And Jean Pierre? . . . In her rapture she thought only of him. . . . Otto gave a brief, intense thought to everything which was vanishing behind them. Then, great in his way, he resumed:

"Hermann is too little for me to think of separating him from you at present. I leave him in your hands until he is five years old. He will be brought to me every year, one month at Easter and two months during my vacation. Afterwards, with equal rights in your favour, I will have him here, in order to provide for his education."

Trusting in the supremacy of his race, he imagined that, after the momentary absence, he would be able to re-establish the equilibrium and make Hermann into a German. Thus, with humanity, he conciliated all interests. With much dignity he waited for the reply.

But Marthe, overcome with joy, burst into tears. The surprise was too pleasing a one, liberation had come too suddenly. In her fervour she imagined, on her side, that revenge was certain,— that Jean Pierre would become French. The future was in her hands! It merely depended on her skill, affection, intelligence and faith. Born in France, edu-

cated as she knew how to educate him, her son, when twenty-one, would choose. . . . Taking Otto's hand in hers and pressing it, all she could say, stammeringly, was:

"Thank you!"

One moment more they remained in front of the window without speaking. Evening was falling on the magnificent horizon. The mountains were becoming a dark violet in the sunset. Large purple and black clouds, resembling volcanic smoke, were rising from the sun, as from a crater of gold. They were standing side by side, and could have touched each other. . . . But invisible walls stood between them; from one to the other was the whole distance which separates Marburg from Amiens, the towers of St. Elizabeth from the steeple of the Cathedral, dismembered and vanquished France from triumphant Germany. . . . There were the frontiers of the heart. Stronger than love, the feeling for race and country had, under the influence of war, swept away the past. . . . Before them stretched, like a disputed country, their son's distant future.

Lower and lower, every moment, sank the sun; finally, it disappeared. And with unspeakable melancholy, their eyes fixed on the dark and blood-red clouds, Otto and Marthe felt the best part of themselves die with the day.

THE END

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